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LAFITTE;

Or, THE PIRATE OF THE GULF.

BY PROF. J. H. INGRAHAM.



LAFITTE WIELDED IN HIS RIGHT HAND HIS FORMIDABLE CUTLASS, UPON WHICH HE RECEIVED THE RINGING STEEL OF THE OFFICER.

Lafitte;

OR,

THE PIRATE OF THE GULF.

BY PROF. J. H. INGRAHAM.

Revised and Edited

BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM.

CHAPTER I.

AN EXILE'S HOME.

In a secluded and richly-wooded amphitheater, formed by a crescent of green hills, among which the romantic Kennebec wanders to the ocean, there stood, until within a recent period, the ruins of a stately mansion. Its walls were enameled with dark-green moss, and mantled with vines, as if Nature, with a gentle hand, had striven to conceal the devastations of Time.

Huge chimneys, terminating in fantastic turrets, heavy cornices, deep moldings and panel-work, combined with the elaborate architecture of the whole venerable structure, indicated a relic of that substantial age immediately subsequent to the Revolutionary War—an age, although then in its decline, as eminently characterized by moral and physical stability as the present by their opposites.

At the period of our tale the handsome edifice of which these melancholy ruins were both the monument and mausoleum, reared its lofty walls amid a grove of oaks, whose hoary bodies and the majestic spread of their gnarled and giant limbs, while they told of their great age—numbered by centuries not years—bore testimony to the dignity and grandeur of the primeval forest of which they were alone the representatives.

Beneath the thickly-interlaced branches of these trees, and sloping gently to the shore of the river, lay, outrolled, a lawn of the thickest verdure. It was relieved and enlivened by half a score of ruminating, well-conditioned cows, standing or reclining in attitudes indicative of comfort and repose, and a small flock of long-fleeced sheep, of a rare and valued breed, was dispersed in picturesque groups under the more venerable trees. A gracefully formed juniper—conjuring up visions of lovely woman, in velvet hat, nodding plumes, and generous robes sweeping the earth, which the spirited animal beneath her disdains with his delicate hoofs—a beautiful, slender-limbed saddle-horse—and a brace of coal-black ponies, with long tails and flowing manes, which are at once associated with boys and holidays—stood together in a social group beside a small but romantic lake in the midst of the wood.

This pellucid sheet of water was spanned by a fantastic bridge of trestle-work, suspended with the lightness of a spider's web from one green bank to the other. It connected a broad graveled avenue, which, commencing at the river, wound among the trees, yielding to the natural undulations of the grounds, and terminated at the spacious flight of steps leading to the piazza of the mansion, the two fronts of which were ornamented by a light colonnade of eight slender Ionic columns. Tall windows extended quite to the floor of the piazza, and, defended by Venetian blinds, served as the only entrances to the interior, from the front.

The house faced to the west, and commanded an extensive prospect of the river, sweeping boldly around the peninsula upon which it was situated, and forming, at the distance of half a mile, a noble bend, remarkable for the extreme beauty of its curvature. Beyond, ascending to the horizon, as they retreated from the eye, spread cultivated farms, studded with farm-houses and huge barns; more remotely, dense forests blended with the bases of a chain of low, blue mountains, known as the Monmouth hills.

At the north and south, the view was shut in by alternately cultivated and thickly-wooded hills or rocky eminences, retreating on either hand from the river in a semicircular form, to a little less than a mile in the rear, and inclosing the dwelling and grounds in a glen, which, also embraced on the western side by the curve of the river, presented an area nearly circular in its shape.

Political events in sunny France—in which the proprietor of this lovely domain bore no ordinary share, compelled him to seek a land where he could cherish his liberal principles with safety, and educate his twin sons to act their part honorably and with distinction on the theater of life.

Orphans from their birth, his sons never knew their mother. The hour which ushered them into existence ushered her spirit into heaven. Strangers to maternal love, and educated, since the exile of their stern parent, in almost monastic seclusion, they early attained an uncommon maturity of mind and firmness of character, combined with manly sentiments and a habit of thinking independently, early taught them by their father's example, and inculcated, cultivated, and wrought out to maturity by him, with untiring assiduity.

Their fifteenth birthday arrived, and although in years they numbered equally, in mind, and person, and habits, they were wholly dissimilar. Achille, the eldest of the twins, had attained dignity of mind and manly beauty of person far in advance of his years. Tall and finely proportioned, he was the youthful image of his noble father. Proud, aspiring, and ambitious, with a spirit that spurned severity, but yielded to gentleness, he acted from impulse rather than from reflection or a sense of duty; while a mine of passions, never yet sprung, existed like a slumbering volcano in his bosom. It required but a spark to produce a conflagration that should feed upon and torture him like another Prometheus, or burn on, extinguishable only with life.

That spark was at length elicited by his brother, an amiable boy of a milder nature, retiring habits and quiet disposition. The reverse of Achille, he was apparently as meek as his brother was spirited. The former resembled his father; but Henri represented his mother and her gentler virtues. He not only represented the excellence of her heart and mind, but her lovely image was revived in his beautiful countenance; and, as year after year unfolded in his youthful face the more striking and perfect resemblance his graceful features bore to those of his deceased mother, the father recognized the features of the fair girl who had won his early affections, and whom, during the few short months of their union, he had worshiped with religious devotion.

Achille was the stronger, physically and intellectually, and, unconsciously to the subject, exerted that wonderful influence over Henri which mind will often assert over mind. He was his guide in his studies, his leader in sports, his enticer into dangers, and his assistant in the thousand petty difficulties of childhood. He loved him with a sincere and devoted attachment, fervently reciprocated by his warm-hearted and unsophisticated brother. But their mutual affection was the principle which unites the vine and the oak. His brother's love was the stay of Henri's clinging affections, and his endearing attachment, by drawing out the kindlier feelings of his sterner nature, rendered Achille better and happier.

The morning which ushered in their fifteenth birthday was bright and cloudless. Achille was standing in the south window of his father's library, his person half-concealed by the rich drapery, gazing out upon the limpid river as it glided silently past.

The green meadows beyond the river, sprinkled with flocks, faded into the blue haze floating around the distant hills. The air was alive with melody from a myriad of glad birds, climbing the rosy skies, and emulating the poised lark thrilling forth his matin-song to the rising sun. There was a charm of beauty, peace, and rural happiness thrown over nature. Her works breathed inspiration, and spoke that morning in the sweetest accents of his heart. But he heeded not her language. A voice softer-toned and more eloquent, pleaded to his soul. It was the voice of ambition. Of boyish ambition it is true, but still ambition in her loftiest mood. In years but a boy, the sterner spirit of a man dwelt in the swelling bosom of the young aspirant. Visions of the unvalued future, wherein appeared pageants of conquering armies, thrones and scenes of vast dominion, floated before his youthful imagination; and in the leader of the armies, the occupant of the thrones, the controller of empires, he recognized HIMSELF!

CHAPTER II.

A CATASTROPHE THAT ENDED IN REMORSE.

"ACHILLE!"

The young aspirant started from the contemplation of scenes of triumph and empire, carnage and blood—the last too soon to be realized—and beheld standing by his side his father, who had entered the library and approached him unperceived. Seating himself in the recess of the window, he motioned his son to a chair, placed opposite to his own. The bearing of the veteran exile was at all times dignified and imposing.

The affection of Achille toward him was not unmingled with sentiments of fear. But he was the only being before whom the proud eye of the boy quailed!

That his father loved him, he had never doubted. He knew that he was proud of him, "his noble, fearless boy," as he would term him, while parting the dark hair from his handsome forehead, after he had performed some daring feat of boyhood. When, however, he spoke to Henri, the gratified and proud expression of his eye softened under the influence of a milder feeling, and his smile would fade into a sweet but melancholy expression; nor would Achille have exchanged his inspiring language to him, "his daring boy!" for the kind tone and manner he involuntarily assumed when he would say, "Henri, my child, come and amuse me with your prattle!"—nor would the tearful eye, as he gazed into the upturned face of the amiable boy, have pleased his wild spirit like the enkindling glance of that admiring eye, when turned upon him in paternal pride. Achille translated his glance of pride into an expression of love, and sympathized with one

so evidently regarded with an air of sorrow, if not of pity, as his brother. If he gave the subject a moment's reflection, it resulted in the flattering conviction that he himself was the favorite son.

The morning which introduces him to our notice, he learned, too painfully, that Henri was the favorite child of the old soldier's affection, and that, so far from loving him but a little less, he loved him *not*. The look of affection which he had regarded as an expression of compassion for the gentler nature of his brother, he learned was an expression of the intensest parental affection. Indeed, in his brother, his father worshiped the image of his departed wife; and all his affection for her, which the hand of death had withered in its freshness, was renewed in his beloved Henri. He was doubly loved—for his mother and for himself; and there remained for Achille—so the sensitive and high spirited boy learned that day—no place in the affection of his only parent.

His father, after being seated, addressed him: "Achille, you are now of an age to enter the university, for admission to which the nature and extent of your studies eminently qualify you. In a few days, the annual examination of candidates will take place. In the interval, you can select and arrange a library for your room, and collect what other conveniences you may require. You will leave in the first packet that passes down the river."

This was a delightful announcement to the subject of it, and not wholly unexpected. To the university, that world in miniature, he had long looked forward with pleasurable anticipation.

The two brothers had both prepared for admission into the same class, and he inquired if Henri was to accompany him.

"He is not," replied the father, coldly and firmly.

"He is certainly prepared, sir."

"Undoubtedly! But I have decided that he is to be my companion to Europe this season, as I fear his delicate constitution will not admit of his confining himself at present to sedentary pursuits."

"I was anticipating that happiness for myself," he replied, chagrined at his father's preference for his brother, so unexpectedly manifested, not only by his words but by his tone and manner. He had long known that it was his intention to visit his native land, and expected to accompany him, although his expectations were founded rather on his own wishes than any encouragement he had received from him.

Achille felt keenly the preference. The coldness, if not severity, of manner assumed by his father in communicating his determination offended his pride, while his decided partiality for his brother wounded his self-love. He was well aware that, his resolution once formed, he was unbending—that his brother was to go, and that he was to remain; and with a bitter and wounded spirit he turned his darkening brow from the penetrating gaze of his father, and looked forth upon the peaceful scene outspread beneath the windows of the library.

A closing door roused him from his gloomy and sinful reverie, and turning, he saw that he was once more alone. No—not quite alone! An evil spirit—jealousy! pregnant with dark thoughts and evil imaginings, was his companion. An hour passed away, and he still stood where his father left him. Then took place his first fierce conflict with his hitherto slumbering passions. The first suspicion that his brother was loved the best then entered his thoughts. Once admitted, it undermined, by its subtle logic, the better feelings of his heart.

But an hour had expired, and the canker-worm of hatred was gnawing at the last fiber that bound him to his brother, when the hall door was thrown open, and the guileless subject of his dark meditations bounded into the room, holding in his extended hand a gemmed locket.

"See, brother, see!" he exclaimed, in a loud and delighted tone, "what my dear father has presented me as a birthday's gift!"

Achille raised his eyes and fixed them upon the sparkling locket, which inclosed the miniature of an exceedingly beautiful female. He recognized the portrait of their mother, which, till that moment, had ever been worn, as the pilgrim wears the cross, next to the heart of his father.

Now he saw the cherished relic in the possession of his brother, a gift from him. His lip curled, and his dark eye became darker still at this stronger confirmation of his father's partiality; yet he neither spoke nor betrayed his feelings by any visible emotion, but the fires within his breast raged still fiercer. Like pent-up flames, his passions gained vigor by the efforts made to smother them.

For the first time in his life he looked upon Henri without a smile of tenderness. He felt, indeed, although his lips moved not with the biting words rising to them, that the poison of his heart must have been communicated to his eyes, for, as his brother caught their unwonted expression, he suddenly checked himself, and the gay tones of his voice sunk subdued to a

strange whisper, as he faintly inquired, at the same time placing his delicate hand upon his shoulder, "if he were ill?"

"No!" he replied, with an involuntary sternness that startled even himself.

The next moment he would have given worlds to recall that fatal monosyllable and pronounce it over again more gently, but it was too late. The sensitive boy recoiled, as if he had encountered the eye of a basilisk; but suddenly recovering himself, he laughed, the rich blood came back again, and his eye glanced brightly as he said, but half-assured:

"Brother, you did but try to frighten me—you were not in earnest angry with me?"

"Leave me to myself," he roughly replied; "I am not in a humor to be trifled with!"

Mysterious inconsistency of will and action! He would have given his right hand, or plucked out his right eye, to have recalled the first angry word. The first word spoken by him in an angry mood hewed out a pathway for legions.

As he spoke the tears gushed into Henri's eyes, and yielding to the influence of affection, he sprung forward and cried:

"Brother! Achille! wherein have I offended you?"

An evil spirit now seemed to have taken possession of him. With angry violence he thrust him from his embrace, and a curse sprung to his lips. The poor boy, reeling, fell forward, striking his forehead violently against a marble pedestal upon which stood an alabaster statue of the Madonna, and the warm blood spouted from his gashed temples over the cold, white robes of the image.

It was a spectacle of horror, and the guilty being gazed wildly upon his prostrate brother, and thought of Abel and his murderer—upon the red-sprinkled image, and laughed, "Ha! ha! ha!" as maniacs laugh, at the fitness of his first offering—a mangled brother—at the shrine of the Virgin Mother.

The momentary but terrific spell upon his reason passed away, and throwing himself upon the senseless boy, he attempted to stop the ebbing current of life as it trickled in a small red stream down his pale forehead, steeping his auburn curls in gore, at the same time calling loudly and madly for assistance.

His father, alarmed by his cries, followed by the servants, rushed into the library.

"Help, sir! My brother is dying!" cried Achille, wildly.

The old man sprung forward and caught his bleeding child in his arms. His practiced eye at once comprehended the extent of the injury he had sustained. He had received a deep cut in the shape of a crescent over the left eyebrow, yet not severe enough to endanger life. The free flow of the blood soon restored him to his senses, and opening his eyes, as with a tender hand his father stanching the bubbling blood, he fixed them upon his brother with an expression that eloquently spoke forgiveness.

"God pity me!" exclaimed the repentant and now broken-spirited boy; for the look went to his heart, and burying his face in his hands, he precipitately left the room.

The long and bitter hours of grief, remorse, and shame he suffered in the solitude of his chamber no tongue but his who has felt like him can utter. He experienced sentiments of hatred toward himself, a loathing and detestation that tempted him to put a period to his existence. When he recalled the reproving yet forgiving look of his suffering brother he felt degraded in his own eyes; that he must be in his brother's he was painfully aware, and with an aching heart and humbled spirit he mentally acknowledged the gentle Henri to be his superior.

CHAPTER III.

LOVE.

DAY closed in night, and night opened into morning, for many long and tedious weeks, and still the old soldier sat by the bedside of his wounded child. The generous boy, too honorable to prevaricate, yet too forgiving and attached to his brother to expose all the truth, had told him that he had fallen, not that Achille had thrust him against the pedestal.

Their father never knew the agency of Achille in the accident; yet, bearing testimony to the truth of the maxim that suspicion is the handmaiden of guilt, Achille suspected that he was informed of all the circumstances connected with the act. This suspicion, giving its own tinge to the medium through which he viewed and commented upon his father's deportment toward him after the accident, led him to conclusions as unjust as they were unmerited by his parent, and acting from these sentiments, he shunned his society, and never entered his presence but with a sullen air of defiance.

Occasionally he visited his brother's chamber, when, in answer to his frequent inquiries of the nurse, he learned that he slept; then, pressing the fevered hand, or kissing the cheek of the sleeping sufferer, he would watch over him with the tenderness of a mother, until the restless motions of the invalid, indicating the termination of his slumbers, or the heavy footsteps of his father ascending the stairway in the hall,

warned him to retire to the seclusion of his own room, or into the deeper solitudes of the forests.

A few months elapsed after this event, during which Achille became a student within the walls of a neighboring university, and his brother, entirely recovered, accompanied his father on his transatlantic voyage.

The period of Achille's residence at the university afforded no incidents which exerted any influence over subsequent years. It glided away pleasantly and rapidly. He was known by the professors as one who, never in his study, or a consumer of midnight oil, was always prepared for the recitation-room, and by his fellows as a young man of violent passions, but a warm friend and magnanimous enemy. Often violent and headstrong in his actions, he was just and equitable in his intercourse with those around him.

At the early age of nineteen he received its honors, and bidding adieu to the classic walls within which he had passed so many happy hours—the happiest of his life—he proceeded to Bath, an adjacent port, where he expected his father to disembark on his return from his residence abroad.

The little green coasting packet—in that early day, when steam navigation had not superseded those teachers of patience to domestic voyagers, the sloop and schooner—had passed up the river the previous evening.

The sun had just set in a sea of gold and crimson, and a mellow light hung like a veil of gauze over land and water, when, after winding round one of the graceful bends of the Kennebec, and ascending a rocky eminence, up which the road wound, the wooded glen, with the turreted chimneys of his paternal roof, appeared, lifting themselves above the oaks, in the midst of which it stood. Reining in his horse upon the brow of the hill, he gazed down upon the lovely scene—the sweeping river, with a little vessel at anchor upon its bosom—the surrounding hills, the venerable oaks, and serpentine walks—with a thoughtful eye.

Spurring his restless horse down the precipice before him, as he perceived the shades of night thickly gathering, he soon gained the avenue leading to his paternal dwelling.

Dismounting at the spacious gateway, he traversed the walk to the house with a rapid step, anxious to hasten the meeting, which his heart foreboded would be tinged with both pleasure and pain. He had placed his foot upon the first step, to ascend to the portico, when the apparition of a graceful female figure, gliding past the brightly-illuminated window, stayed his ascent; while emotions of surprise and curiosity usurped for the moment every other feeling.

"Who can she be?" was his mental interrogation, as her retreating figure disappeared. But he had no time for conjectures, for the old gray-headed gardener, Phillipe, who had followed his exiled master, through all his fortunes, recognized him, as he was taking his evening round about the grounds, and, by a loud exclamation of joy, intimated his arrival to the whole household. The next moment he stood in the presence of his father and brother!

We will briefly pass over the interview between them. By the former, his reception was dignified and condescending; yet there was an absence of affection in his manner, as he received his congratulations, imperceptible to an ordinary observer, but to which the lively feelings of the young man were keenly sensitive—a cold politeness in his look and tone, such as a father should not wear to greet a long-absent son. And such was the proud spirit of Achille, that he assumed a bearing of *hauteur* and distant respect, which measured his parent's coldness.

Henri, whose slight form and girlish beauty were lost in a manlier elegance of person, met him as brother should meet brother—frankly and affectionately. Achille returned his embrace as cordially as it was bestowed; but the blood froze in his veins as the purple scar glaring, half-bid by his flowing hair, upon his fair forehead, met his eye.

Days and weeks glided by, and Achille loved!

M. Langueville, a distinguished Frenchman, his maternal uncle, and the only brother of his mother, had married an American lady of beauty and fortune. They both died within a short period of each other, leaving an only daughter, appointing his father the guardian both of her person and inheritance. To receive this trust was the object of his visit to Europe, and on his return his ward accompanied him; to make her uncle's mansion her future home.

The lovely vision of the library was his cousin. Gertrude Langueville, at the period of our tale, possessed a form of faultless symmetry, voluptuously rounded, and just developing into womanhood—a rich bud bursting into a full-blown rose. Neither too tall, nor too short, her figure was of that indefinite size, which a graceful poet has termed "beautifully less." In her manner, she combined the dignity of a woman with the naturalness of a wayward child.

Just turned sixteen, she knew the power to charm, while she seemed not to use it, as, with the bewitching grace of a girl and the refinement of a woman, she enchained the admira-

tion of those around her, while they bent forward to listen to the rich, harp-like tones of her voice in conversation. Her eyes were of the mildest blue of heaven. They spoke of a mild and gentle spirit; yet her lofty forehead told that also a spirit proud and high slumbered within their gentle radiance. Intellectual, she was both romantic and imaginative; and few of her sex were gifted with a mind of higher order, or more accurately cultivated.

Obedient to the waywardness and contraries of her character, she was one moment a Hebe, charming by her grace and vivacity, brightened by the sparkling expression of her eloquent eyes and beaming face, upon which every thought brilliantly played—mantling it with a richer beauty; or, now, a Minerva, commanding admiration by the originality and lofty character of her mind.

Achille admired—loved—worshiped her!

His love was unrequited!

CHAPTER IV.

LOVE AND JEALOUSY.

SPRING was just opening in that enlivening and rapid manner peculiar to northern latitudes, when Achille and his brother attended their cousin on a morning excursion along the romantic banks of the river.

They had reined in their horses on the verge of a lofty cliff overhanging the river, and remained gazing upon its icy surface, which, as far as the eye could reach, north and south, presented one vast plain of crystal. The lateness of the season rendered it imprudent to venture upon it, although, except in its soft, white appearance, under the warm sun, it presented no indication of weakness. Gertrude, excited by the gay canter along the cliff, and in unusually high spirits, proposed galloping across the river (which during the winter they had frequently done), and ascending a hill on the opposite side, from whose summit there was an extensive prospect she had repeatedly admired.

"By no means, Gertrude," exclaimed Achille, "it would be rashness to attempt it."

"I think not, cousin," she replied, with that love of opposition which is the prescriptive right of the sex; "it is evidently very firm; only three days ago I saw several horsemen passing down the river at a hand-gallop."

"But you forget the warmth of the sun, Gertrude!"

"Not enough to affect this solid mass before us," she replied; "at all events I can but try it."

So, slightly shaking her bridle, she cantered down the smooth road to the foot of the cliff, rapidly followed by the brothers.

"Do not venture upon the ice, cousin Gertrude, I beseech," mildly remonstrated Achille, when they gained the beach; "you will certainly endanger your life!"

"How very pathetic and careful, cousin of mine," she replied, with a playful, yet half-vexing air; "if you really think there is so much danger, we will excuse your attendance. I am fearless as to the result, and quite confident that the ice will bear Leon and me," and her fine eyes glanced mischievously as she spoke.

Biting his lip to suppress his feelings, Achille calmly observed:

"I regard not myself, Gertrude; it is for you I speak. If you are resolved to go, I shall certainly accompany you, although the greater the weight upon the ice, the more imminent will be the danger."

"So will Henri; will you not, Henri?" she said, half assuredly, half inquiringly.

"Certainly, Gertrude; although I think with brother, that there is a spice of temerity in the attempt. Allow me to dis—"

"Allons, then," she cried, gayly, exciting the spirited animal upon which she was mounted to spring upon the crumbling verge of the ice.

Achille buried his spurs in the sides of his horse, and, in one bound, was the next moment at the head of her palfrey, dismounted, with the rein in his grasp.

"For God's sake, Gertrude, stop! you must not venture so rashly," he cried, with energy; "do not go, I beg of you!"

"Loose my rein, Achille, and don't be so earnest about a mere trifle," she said, hastily.

"Nay, cousin," said Achille, in a softer tone, "the life of Gertrude can be—"

"Now don't be sentimental, cousin Achille," she laughingly interrupted, "do be just good enough to free Leon's head. See how impatient he is."

"Do, cousin; allow me to plead!"

"No, no, you know how I hate pleading," and, without replying further, she dexterously extricated her bridle from his grasp, touched her impatient horse smartly with the whip, and sprung forward like an arrow.

"Achille! your horse!" exclaimed Henri. "Mad girl, she is lost!" he added, spurring after her, and in an instant was galloping by her side. Achille turned on the instant to vault into his saddle, and beheld his horse, which he had left unsecured on dismounting, coursing, with his mane flowing, and the stirrups wildly flying, at full speed on his way homeward.

Through his clinched teeth, he uttered a malediction upon the flying animal; then turning to

look after the rash girl, he scarcely forbore repeating it, as he saw her with his brother at her side, cantering over the brittle and transparent surface of the river.

They were more than half-way to the opposite shore, when a loud report, deadened like the subterranean discharge of cannon, or the first rumbling of an earthquake, struck his ears, accompanied by a white streak, darting, like lightning, along the surface of the ice, from shore to shore.

"God of heaven!" he exclaimed, uttering a cry of horror, as he saw the vast field of ice shiver along its whole extent. With a loud voice he shouted for them to return for their lives. Yet they heard him not, although now evidently aware of their danger; for they increased the speed of their horses, and made for the opposite shore, to which they were nearest, as the only chance for safety.

Sharp reports, in rapid succession, like the near discharge of musketry, now reverberated along the ice, which began to swell and heave like the surface of the ocean in a calm. Save the agitation on the river, all else was still. The skies wore the pure blue of spring, the winds were hushed, the air was close and sultry, and a deep silence like that of night, reigned over nature.

A shriek of terror suddenly reached his ears, fearfully breaking the stillness of the morning. His heart echoed the cry, but his arm could bring no aid. The adventurers had diminished their furious speed, and were hovering on the verge of a chasm, which suddenly yawned before them. To advance was destruction; to retrace their way, equally threatening. There was a moment's hesitancy, Achille observed from the summit of a pyramid of ice, which had been thrown upon the beach, and then he saw them turn their horses' heads, and, with a rapid flight, seek, over the moving, unsteady surface of the heaving flood, the shore they had left.

Onward they flew, like the wind. The laboring ice shivered and groaned, heaving itself in huge masses of wild and fantastic shapes into the air behind them. Near the shore toward which they were now directing their fearful course it had yet remained firm. But, as they advanced, it rose in vast piles in their path, while a yawning gulf gaped wide before them. Loudly and despairing Achille shouted, as he indicated with his riding-whip the surer way of escape from this chasm, which was momentarily enlarging; otherwise, he could render them no assistance.

They saw their danger, but too late. Their impetus was too powerful to be resisted by the slight fingers of the maiden, as she drew in her reins with painful and terrified exertion, and her horse dashed in among the broken masses of ice, as they were agitated by the current, and hurled, crashing and grinding with a loud noise, against each other. A wild cry pierced the ears of the paralyzed Achille, and horse and rider disappeared beneath the surface.

Henri, who with a stronger arm had reined in his fiery animal, no sooner witnessed the fearful plunge, than, springing from his horse, he flew to the verge from which she had leaped, and for an instant gazed down into the cold flood, which had closed like a pall over the lovely girl. The next moment, the deep waters received his descending form into their bosom.

A moment of intense suffering, during which Achille's heart distended almost to bursting, passed, and the waters were agitated, and the head of her favorite Leon came to the surface. The affrighted animal, glaring around, his dilated eyes intelligent with almost human expression, uttered a terrible cry, and, pawing with his fore-feet upon the cakes of ice floating near him, made several violent and ineffectual attempts, with the exercise of extraordinary muscular exertion, to draw himself upon them. His veins swelled with the effort, and started out in bold relief from his glossy hide, his nostrils expanded and gushed forth blood upon the white ice, and audible groans came from his bursting chest.

In vain were the tremendous efforts of the noble animal. His strength gradually failed, and he could at last retain his hold only with one hoof upon the crumbling verge: that at last fell into the water. He then gave an appalling cry, and, rolling his large eyes round in despair and terror, sunk from the sight of the horror-stricken Achille.

"She is lost, lost, lost!" he exclaimed, imprecating his situation, which rendered it impossible for him to assist her.

Large cakes of ice, between the elevation upon which he stood and the place where they had disappeared, constantly rolled by, tossed and whirled, like egg-shells, tumultuously upon the fierce torrent. Conscious of his total inability to afford the least aid, he stood gazing, without the power to move, upon the dark sepulcher which had entombed the only being he loved.

"Merciful Providence, I thank thee!" he exclaimed, dropping upon one knee, with clasped and uplifted hands, as he saw appear, far below the spot where Leon sunk, one after another, the heads of his cousin and brother. She was

lifeless in his arms, her luxuriant tresses floating upon the waves, her beautiful head pillowed upon his shoulder!

With a cry of joy he sprang forward to the point toward which he was swimming among the floating ice with his lovely burden. Henri was a bold and experienced swimmer. In boyhood it was the only amusement in which he delighted or fearlessly engaged. Achille stood upon the utmost verge of the ice, and cast his riding-cloak out upon the water, retaining the tassel that he might draw them, now almost exhausted, to the shore.

"No, brother!" said Henri faintly, yet firmly. And a triumphant smile lighted his pale cheek as he declined the proffered aid. In a moment afterward he laid the fair girl upon the bank—the preserver of her life!

Achille cursed in his heart the fortune that had blessed him. When as he swam with her, he saw her marble cheek reposing against his, his arm encircling her waist.

"Would to God," he muttered, in the dark chambers of his bosom, "that she had made the cold waters her tomb, than be saved thus! But no, no!—too blessed a death for that proud boy to die! His death shall be less grand."

His lip curled bitterly as he spoke, and his blood fired with the dark thoughts his new-born hatred and revenge called up; while passions which had slumbered for years were once more roused within him, hydra-headed and terrible.

Like a superior being, his brother gently laid the breathless form of his cousin upon the bank. Achille gazed upon them both for an instant in silence, and, while he gazed, felt his bosom torn with conflicting emotions of love and hatred.

As he bent over the lifeless girl, chafing her slender fingers and snowy arm, he half-breathed the wish that she might not return to consciousness, to be told that Henri was her preserver. He looked upon his brother, as he assisted him in restoring her to animation, and felt that hatred, malice, and revenge burned in the concentrated expression of his eyes; but as he encountered his proud glance, and witnessed the calm dignity of his demeanor, he withdrew his gaze, but bated him the more.

But a few minutes elapsed after she had been laid upon the bank, when, accompanied by the old gardener and one or two of the servants, their father advanced rapidly toward them, having been alarmed by the appearance of Achille's horse flying riderless to the stables.

The breathless old man, instinctively comprehending the whole scene, knelt by the side of his beloved niece, and by the united efforts of the three, she was soon resuscitated. Then for the first time he looked up, and observing the dripping garments of Henri, he smiled upon him with that comprehensive and affectionate smile he wore when he looked upon those he loved. But as he turned upon Achille, there was no glance of affection, or smile of approval—his eye was cold, severe, and passionless.

Gertrude at length unclosed her eyes, and gazed intelligently upon those around her; then resting them for an instant upon the saturated dress of her cousin, she slowly dropped the lids again to shade them from the light, while her lips gently parted, and almost inaudibly pronounced:

"Henri!"

Achille sprang as if a serpent had stung him, and a fearful imprecation thrilled upon his tongue. His father frowned menacingly, while a smile lighted up his brother's features, and the glance accompanying it was of conscious victory.

CHAPTER V.

A MEETING BETWEEN THE BROTHERS AND ITS TERMINATION.

A FEW days expired after the events just related, and the fields of ice were swept to the ocean. The river flowed onward silently and majestically, gently meandering along the verge of green meadows, or darting swiftly with noise and foam around projecting rocks, its pellucid bosom dotted with white sails, its sloping hills bursting into luxuriance, and its overhanging forests enveloping themselves in their verdant robes.

Achille had passed the day ostensibly in hunting, but really to prey undisturbed, in the wooded solitudes of the cliffs, upon his diseased spirit.

The approach of night found him leaning on his hunting-piece, his empty game-bag lying unheeded at his feet, standing upon the summit of a cliff which overhung the river. The sun had just gone down beyond the hills of Mouth in a sea of sapphire, the western star hung tremblingly in his path, while the crescent moon, half-unveiling her chaste face, shed a holy light down upon the earth, mingling her pale rays with the golden hues of twilight.

The scene of his cousin's rash adventure and his brother's triumph lay beneath him. A silence, broken only by the gurgling of the waters as they swept by among the loose rocks at the base of the cliff, or the sighing of the trees as they waved heavily to the low, night-wind, reigned around him. With a troubled brow and trembling lip, while he crushed a

starting tear beneath his eyelids, he communed with his own wounded spirit.

"Virgin Mother! have I not loved her—loved her as a man seldom loves? Was she not the object of my thoughts by day—the bright spirit of my dreams? Did I not adore (forgive me, Mary, Mother!), worship her next to thee? Was not her image enshrined within the innermost temple of my soul? Oh, God! oh, God!" and he leaned his head upon his gun, and the big tears coursed down his manly cheek.

The momentary weakness—if sorrow for shattered hopes and crushed aspirations be weakness—soon passed away, and he stood up with a firm and collected manner. His brow gradually became set, his eye glowed, and an expression of rage curled and agitated his lip, as he continued in a changed voice:

"I would not have profaned her hand by a careless touch—yet I have beheld her in my brother's arms! Her cheek, that rich delicate cheek, with the hue of a rosy cloud, I have seen reposing upon my brother's bosom—imbibing from it life and warmth! I have beheld her tresses mingled with his, her sylph-like waist encircled in his embrace, and knew that their throbbing hearts beat together, as in one bosom, beneath the wave!"

His dark meditations were interrupted by the hum of low voices ascending from the beach, at the foot of the cliff upon which he stood. Leaning over the precipice, he looked eagerly down, but deep shadows at the base obscured every object. Yet he listened with every sense, as the wily Indian watches for the light footfall of his foe—his expanded ear alone the organ of communication with external objects.

A low and melodious voice rose upon the still air like music. It fell upon the heart of the listener, not as melody falls upon the soul, soothingly, but with the unholy influence of a spell.

"Nay, Henri, I love him not; I fear his wild and ungovernable spirit—I fear but I love him not!"

"You said but now, dear Gertrude, that you could not withhold your admiration from what you have termed my fiery brother's noble nature and chivalrous spirit. Are not these the qualities that win a maiden's heart?"

"How little you are skilled, my dear Henri, in that riddle—a woman's heart! Such qualities may allure, but never win. Achille can, and will command, but never win, esteem. He may elicit admiration, but never love!"

This was the language of the being Achille so madly worshiped. And did he listen to the silvery tones of her voice, thus crushing forever all his hopes, in silence? Such silence as precedes the earthquake before it bursts. The voices had died away, but they still rung with fearful echoes through his bosom. In a few moments, as he stood transfixed, overwhelmed by a wave of passions, a winding in their path brought the voices of his brother and his cousin again within reach of his ear, and, as they walked slowly along, he saw the white garments of Gertrude glancing through the branches of the intervening trees.

"Nay, then, it shall be yours, if the gift be worth accepting!" he heard in a scarcely audible voice.

"Rich—lovely treasure!" warmly exclaimed the happy and favored youth, seizing the graceful hand she had ingenuously given him, and pressing it passionately to his lips.

"Ha!" exclaimed Achille through his teeth, and striking his forehead with his clinched hand.

Till now he had stood, with suppressed breath, a burning eye, and expanded ear, like a statue of stone. But he could endure no more; and scarcely suppressing a fierce cry, he sprang, leaping and bounding like a madman, down the face of the precipitous rock, in a direction opposite to that taken by the lovers, and in a moment stood upon the beach.

Hour after hour he paced the hard white terrace of sand, and strove to calm the tempest raging in his bosom. He bared his head to the cool night breeze, and bathed his heated brow in the clear flood at his feet; gazed upon the placid moon, and wooed its soothing influence—upon the solemn forests, and peacefully flowing river; but the low voice of nature spoke to his warring spirit in vain. Midnight passed, and he had given himself up to the guidance of the dark spirit he could not control, and had purposed revenge!

"The exulting boy shall feel what it is to cross my path. He shall die! by Heaven, he shall die!" he whispered, through his compressed lips. At the same instant a loud voice from the cliff rung in his ear.

"Achille! Achille! are you there?" it was his brother. Ascending the cliff with rapidity—the next moment Achille was at his side.

"No, brother," he sarcastically replied with his mouth close to his ear, "I am not there, but here!" and as he spoke, his voice sounded hoarse and unearthly.

Henri started; but observed, without further noticing his brother's singular manner, that, having apprehensions for his safety, from his remaining so long abroad, his father had requested him to seek him.

"Have you met with any game?" he inquired.
"Yes, brother, a sweet dove and a cunning hawk."

"Did you secure the birds?"

"Ay, the hawk; but the dove—the dove, although it wounded me with its angry bill, I could not stain its snowy plumage with red blood. But the subtler bird I have meshed."

"Brother, your language and manner are strange and unwonted, and your face by this faint light looks pale and haggard. Have you met with aught to imbitter your spirit during the day?"

They now, having walked slowly forward while speaking, stood upon the spot where Henri and Gertrude plighted their loves in the sight of Achille. He made no reply, but stopping, suddenly seized him with energy by the arm, and gazed fixedly and revengefully in his face.

"What mean you, brother? Unhand me, Achille!" exclaimed Henri, alarmed.

"Know you where you stand?" he loudly and angrily demanded.

"Release me, brother—what is your mad purpose?"

"Ay, mad!" he reiterated. "Yes, I am mad. Know you where you stand?" he repeated, in a harsh voice, while his eyes glowed visibly even in the deep shadows in which they stood.

"God of Heaven!" he shouted fiercely, on receiving no reply. "Speak, craven, or thus I'll crush you!" and with his iron fingers he pressed the throat of his victim.

"Unhand me, brother!" cried Henri, till now unresisting in the grasp of one from whom he apprehended no real injury, and whose violent rage he supposed would soon subside. But he knew not the irresistible power of the stream which he himself, perhaps unconsciously, had contributed to swell. He had not traced it from the fountain, through all its devious and subterranean windings, fed by a thousand hidden springs, until it approached the precipice over which it was about to thunder a terrible and mighty cataract.

"Do me no harm, Achille; I am your brother!" he added, and with a strong effort freed his throat from his grasp.

"So was Abel his brother's brother, and so—" and his lip withered with scorn and hatred as he spoke: "and so is Henri MINE! but revenge—I love dearer still. Henri, I bate you! Know you this accursed spot, I again repeat?"

Henri, now released from his violent hold, stood proudly up, and baring his pale brow to the moonlight, which fell down upon it through an opening in the foliage like the visible presence of a blessing, answered:

"I do, sir; it is consecrated ground; and I learn from your strange language and manner that you have witnessed the sacred ceremony which has hallowed it!"

He spoke calmly and in a tone of dignity, while a proud, if not sarcastic, smile played faintly over his lips. Achille, already insane with passion, fiercely shouted:

"And it should be doubly consecrated by a sacrifice of blood! Proud fool, your mockery has sealed your fate. I needed only *this*!" and springing fiercely upon him, he seized him by the breast with one hand, and, glancing in the moon while he brandished it in the air, his glittering hunting-knife descended into the bosom of his victim. The warm blood spurted into the face of the fratricide, and bathed his hand in gore.

"Oh, Gertrude—my father—God—brother! I for—forgive," he faintly articulated, and with a groan that sunk to the heart of the murderer, fell heavily to the ground.

For a few moments the guilty being stood over the prostrate body, with his arm outstretched in the position in which he had given the fatal blow; his features rigid, his eyes glazed, and his whole person as motionless as marble—the statue of a murderer chiseled to the life! During that brief moment he endured an eternity of suffering. The torments of ages were compressed into one single moment of time!

But we will not dwell upon this scene. The fratricide fled beneath the cold moon and glittering stars, which, like eyes of intelligence, seemed to look down reprovingly upon him. Onward he hastened, nor dared to look up to them. The little light they shed became hateful, and he felt as if he would draw darkness around him like a garment, hiding himself from both God and man.

"Oh, that the rocks would fall, and hide me forever from myself!" he groaned inwardly, and a loud voice within cried, "Vain, vain! live on! live on forever!" And he buried his face in his cloak, and fled still onward.

The morning broke, and the miserable fugitive still pursued the path which led along the shores of the river to the sea. As the light increased, he saw for the first time that his dress was sprinkled with his brother's blood. He shuddered, and the fatal scene rushed once more upon his mind in all its horrors. Hastily plunging into the river (alas! for the tales of blood of which river and sea are the dumb repositories), he removed all traces of the deed he had committed from his person.

Two hours before sunset he came in sight of the bay, its bosom relieved by many green islands and dotted with white sails. He hailed the broad ocean in the distance with a thrill of pleasure.

Hastening to the coast, which was guarded by precipices, he swung himself down their sides with that recklessness, often the surest means of success, and, springing into a small boat, left in a cove by some of the fishermen, whose huts were scattered in picturesque sites along the cliffs, he raised the little triangular sail, and steered out to sea.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BUCCANEERS OF BARRATARIA.

OUR story now changes to a new theater, with scenes of fresher interest, before which characters move and act who have borne no inconsiderable part in the great drama of the second and last War of Independence, between the United States and Great Britain.

A few years before the commencement of this memorable war, a daring band of privateersmen, inured to every hardship to be encountered in storms of battle or of the elements, and as free as the winds which filled their sails, had obtained commissions from the new Government of Carthage, then first struggling for independence, to cruise against the royalists, or vessels sailing under the flag of Spain. By the authority of these commissions they not only made numerous captures on the great highway of nations, but blockaded many Spanish ports in the Mexican and West Indian seas.

The prizes, which their lawless mode of translating special commissions, and that delusion of the visual organs which led them to see in every flag the gorgeous blazonry of his Majesty of Spain, against whom they had declared open war, enabled them to seize, were taken into the secret bayous and creeks adjacent to the mouth of the Mississippi, where they were effectually concealed and safe from capture or pursuit.

The most important passes made use of by these buccaneers, and with which the scenes of our tale are more immediately connected, lie about twenty leagues to the west of the delta of the Mississippi, and about forty miles southwest of the city of New Orleans. Here, an arm of the Mexican gulf extends four or five leagues inland, terminating in the mouths of several bayous or creeks, which, by many devious and intricate windings, known only to the smugglers, reached to within a few miles of New Orleans. They were navigable only for boats, which here were accustomed to discharge their unlawful freights taken from captured vessels, from whence, through other and more commercial hands, they obtained a rapid and secret conveyance to the city.

This arm of the Gulf is termed the Bay of Barrataria, so called, from that system of naval barratry characterizing the class of men which usually frequented it. The mouth of this bay, or lake, as it is more generally denominated, from being nearly encircled by the land, is defended by a small island about two leagues in length and three miles in breadth, lying in a direction east and west, and nearly parallel with the line of the coast, leaving two narrow passes or entrances to the lake from the Gulf.

That on the east, at the period with which we are to identify our tale, was exceedingly shallow, allowing only the passage of boats of light draught; and the western and main pass only admitted vessels drawing nine and ten feet of water. This island, which is called, indiscriminately, Grande Terre and Barrataria, is not an unbroken level, like the surrounding low lands, constituting the southern section of Louisiana; but, with a striking geological feature in reference to the aspect of this region, it rises abruptly from the sea with bold and precipitous sides, sometimes swelling into slight eminences, several feet in height, covered with dense forests, in which, superior to all other trees, towers the live-oak in its iron strength. Both extremities of this island, at the time of which we speak, were strongly fortified and bristled with cannon, completely commanding both entrances to the inner bay or lake.

Close within the western and deeper inlet to the right, and effectually concealed by the intervening islands from the open sea, from which it was about three leagues distant, was a safe and commodious anchorage; the only secure harbor for many leagues along that dangerous coast.

This island, with its anchorage, was the principal resort of the Carthaginian smugglers. From their little territory, which, in the face of the Government of the United States, they had boldly usurped, the fame of their extraordinary deeds went abroad over sea and land, till the name of Barrataria was associated in the minds of men with crimes and deeds of outlawry, unparalleled in the history of banned and outcast men.

For better security, and more efficient operations, these men, at first sailing singly, each upon his own desperate enterprise, ultimately associated themselves into one body, conferring the command of their squadron on an individual of their number, whose distinguished qualifications as a commander over such a fleet and such

men, manifested on many a bloody deck and many a desperate fight, marked him singularly as their leader.

Besides this great rendezvous of the buccaneers of Barrataria in Louisiana, there were two others of less importance; one of which was situated in an uninhabited part of the coast, in the neighborhood of Carthage, and the other in the West Indian seas, on the coast of the island of St. Domingo.

In one of the romantic bays with which the southern shore of the island of Jamaica is indented, and on one of the rich autumn evenings peculiar to the Indian seas, about fifteen years subsequent to the scenes narrated in the foregoing chapter, a long, low, black schooner, very taunt, and sharp in the bows, with all her light sails drawing freely, and a red and blue signal fluttering aloft, might have been seen bowling gallantly over the miniature waves of the bay, which glittered in the sunlight as if overlaid with gold.

On the deck of the little vessel, which was heavily armed and full of men, stood one of commanding person, whose features, as he leaned over the quarter-railing, were partially concealed by the drooping front of his broad palmetto hat; that portion of his face, however, which could be discerned, displayed a black silken mustachio, curving over a fine mouth, whose general expression was resolution. Now, however, a yellow cigar severed his lips, which languidly embraced it, while an occasional cloud of the blue smoke emitted from beneath his overshadowing hat, curled above his head, and, floating to leeward, blended with the evening haze.

Like one familiar with the scenery, he gazed listlessly upon the glorious prospect spread out before and around him, rising from the shores of the bay, and receding until the clouds bounded the view.

As the vessel sailed further into the bay, her commander's eye glanced with momentary animation along the land, resting upon the cots and hamlets of the negroes, the wall of a distant military post, and the white villas of the planters, dispersed picturesquely on the precipices, and in every green nook along the sides of the receding hills. The schooner, after running about a league into the land, suddenly altered her course, and stood for the entrance of a little harbor or recess of the bay; and now, under her mainsail and jib alone, coasted a bold shore, dotted here and there with a magnificent pimento—groves of which clothed the distant eminences. The summits of the cliffs, beneath which it sailed, were verdant with trees of thickest foliage; while, from their overhanging brows, tiny cataracts, like threads of silver, leaped down into the sea.

The inlet toward which she was advancing, was nearly inclosed by a chain of rocks, towering like gigantic pinnacles; and a craggy promontory overhanging the basin, half-encircled it on the west. Between the termination of this promontory, and the chain of rocks already mentioned, was visible a narrow passage, by which craft of small size only could pass, one at a time, into the pool, sleeping calm and deep within its rocky sides, which, frowning terrifically over it, cast beneath a dark shadow, even while the sun hung high in the heavens. At this time the shadows were deepened in the approaching twilight, and a mysterious gloom gathered over the spot.

Into this nook the little vessel shot rapidly, under the guidance of a skillful hand, and, running into its furthest extremity toward the main land, anchored under a projecting rock, which, cleft to its base, admitted a footway from the water to the plantations upon the highlands in the interior.

"List!" said a low, deep voice from the stern of the vessel; and the distant wail of a bugle fell, with a melancholy cadence, upon the ears of the listening seamen.

Again it rose and fell, low and plaintively, and hardly had the sound died in the air, when three sharp blasts were blown in rapid succession.

"That's the signal! Velasquez is as true as steel to his own avarice!" exclaimed the commander of the schooner. "Be ready all! Ten of you go with me. See to your pistols, and let every other man take a dark lantern and a cutlass, and have two oars slung for a barrow. The rest of you be still as the grave, and alert to obey my signals. Three pistols, Ricardo," he continued, addressing one of his officers, "fired in succession, will be our signal for a reinforcement, should the old Don be too hard for us. Now ashore, my men, all," he added, with rapidity and energy.

Accompanied by a handsome youth and a deformed slave, and followed by ten of his men, in red woolen caps and shirts, and without jackets, he sprung onto a projecting point of rock, and the next moment stood in the mouth of the cleft or defile, terminating at the top of the cliff.

"Madre de Dios!" exclaimed one, in a suppressed whisper, to his comrade by his side, casting his eyes up the narrow and precipitous pass they were slowly ascending, "this must be the up-stairs to purgatory."

"Silence there!" said their leader in a low, distinct voice; and the rest of their way up the defile was effected.

"Now, my brave fellows," said the leader of this night party, when at length he stood at the head of the defile, upon the summit of the cliff, while his men filed past him and gathered in a group beneath the dark shadow of a cluster of palm, cocoanut, and bamboo-cane trees, crowning the heights—"Now, my good men, we are on an expedition, which, if successful—and its success depends on your own wills and sharp cutlasses—will redeem all our past losses, which tempted the crew to mutiny. The free flag, a flowing sheet, and open sea for me. But be ready. I will lead you on this adventure. Ho, Cudjoe!" he said to his slave, "give the answering signal to Velasquez; clearly and well, now, or your boar's head may pay the forfeiture for bungling." The clear, wild, and discordant cry of the gallina, when alarmed, suddenly broke the stillness of the night, now prolonged and low, now sharp and loud, and then suddenly ceased.

"Well done, my guinea-bird," said his master; your beldam mother, Cudjoe, must have fed you on guinea-eggs. Hark! it is answered;" and a similar cry issued from the depths of the wood. In a few moments afterward, it was repeated nearer, and then ceased.

The silence which succeeded was interrupted by a rustling on the left, in the direction of a patch of coarse grass, terminated by clumps of aloes, torch-thistle, and palmetto, forming the boundary to the cultivated portion of the estate. Every eye turned instantly in that direction, and every man's hand was laid upon the butt of his pistol.

"Ho! Leon, my fine creature, but you are a welcome pioneer!" exclaimed the chief, as a noble dog, of majestic size, bounded into their midst, and sprung fawningly against his master's breast. "But down, sir, down, you hug like a Greenland bear! What news bring you from my trusty spy?"

The sagacious animal, as if the careless question of his master had been intelligible, looked into his face and strove to draw his attention by raising his fore-paw to his neck, and striking once or twice forcibly the broad, studded collar encircling it.

"Ha! is it so? Theodore, open your lantern," said the chief to the youth; "cautiously, though;" and he bent over the collar and examined it, while the dog stood wagging his huge tail with a motion expressive of satisfaction.

"Nay, Leon, you are a cheat, sir," said his master, angrily, after a close examination of the collar, which on other occasions had served him for the transmission of billets relating to both love and battle. "Go, sir!" but the noble animal crouched at his feet, forced his paw under his collar, and struggled to break it from his neck.

"The key! the key, Cudjoe!" he cried. The slave thrust his huge hand into a kind of Pandora's box, made in his nether teguments, from which among a heterogeneous display of broken piper, chicken breast-bones, ebony hearts, broken dirk-knobs, charmed relics, and spells against obeahs, fetaks, and melay men, he produced the key to the collar.

His master unlocked it, and, stepping aside with his back to his men, secretly slid aside the smooth plate which constituted its inner surface, and displayed an opening nearly the whole length and breadth of the collar. From this concealed repository, which he thought known only to himself and a fair innamorata, then in a distant land, he drew forth a folded scrap of paper.

"Curse that prying knave, Velasquez!" he muttered; "how in the devil's name could he have learned this secret? But how or when he has made good use of it," he said, casting his eyes over the note, upon which the rays of the lamp fell brightly through a carefully-opened crevice in the sides of the lantern.

"Well, men," he added, turning to his party, "I find Leon has been a trusty messenger; Velasquez has written upon his collar what chances await us at the villa. There are but two superannuated slaves with the old man and his daughter, besides his trusted nephew and secretary, Heberto Velasquez! So, onward. Lead, my trusty Leon!"

The party had now issued from the dark recesses of the wood, the vivid green of whose foliage was just tinged with silver from the rising moon, and after passing with a swift tread round a hedge of bamboo and orange trees, came at once in front of a large old mansion, situated on the declivity of a gentle eminence facing the bay.

"Now listen to my instructions, each man of you," said the leader, as they paused here, awaiting their guide. "There is to be no violence; the persons of the old man and his family are to be held sacred. It is his wealth, not his blood, you seek. Let no man pull a trigger, if he love his life, this night. If we are attacked by the patrol, then, and only in the last emergency, use your fire-arms; for one report of a pistol will bring the neighboring garrison down upon us in force; and our little

Gertrude, lying so snugly in the Devil's Bowl below, would be intercepted by a king's cruiser before she could gain the open sea. Be cool and discreet, and we succeed."

"Hist! here comes our guide. What, ho, there, the word!"

Creeping on his hands and knees, as he spoke, there appeared from beneath a clump of bushes growing by the gate, a low, square figure, naked to the waist, from which to his bony knees, descended a garment equally participating in the honors of the petticoat and small-clothes. As he emerged from the shadow of the moonlight, his glossy hide glistened like mahogany. Gathering himself up to his full height, which was perhaps a little exceeding three feet eleven inches, he replied, with rapid and nervous articulation, while his teeth and the white of his eye glittered in the moonlight—"De word, Mass' Buckra? De word Mass' Berto tell me say be, 'de collar.'"

"You are my man," he exclaimed; "lead on to your young master. Where does he await us?"

"Close by de big tam'rind tree, mass'! 'hind de soute wing ob de house."

"On, my beauty!" he said, gayly, the momentary depression having passed away; "lead on; we follow."

CHAPTER VII.

THE EXILE AND HIS DAUGHTER.

WHILE the band of piratical marauders are winding their way along the intricate paths leading through the grounds, we will precede them to the villa.

This was a long, low edifice, with a steep roof, and a dilapidated and sunken gallery running along its front, supported by a row of heavy, dark-colored columns, some of which leaned inward, while one or two were lying prostrate upon the greensward before the house. At either end of the gallery stood a bronze statue of some classic hero; while at various points in front of the building, and half-concealed by the wild and neglected shrubbery, were several marble statues, a few standing, but more broken into pieces and thrown down, fragments of which were scattered in every direction over the grounds. A green terrace, fronting the bay, extended the whole length of the parterre, or ornamental garden, before the villa. The chimneys, and in many places the walls of the house, had crumbled and fallen; windows were without shutters—the ascent to the piazza, the entrances to the dwelling, and the various walks diverging from it, were choked up with tall coarse grass, and fragments of brick, stone, and marble.

The northern wing of the building alone withstood the devastations of decay, and, at this time, served as the abode of the family whose reported wealth held forth temptations to a band of pirates to invade the sanctity of its domestic circle. The opulent proprietor, an aged Castilian soldier, had enjoyed vast possessions in Mexico, when one of the many revolutions in that ill-fated land sent him forth an exile to other shores. With the value of his estates exchanged for Spanish coin and vessels of gold and silver, or melted down into ingots, and accompanied by his only child, a beautiful dark-eyed Castilian girl, a nephew whom he adopted, and one or two faithful servants, he came to Jamaica, and purchased the estate on which he now dwelt, from one of the ruined planters who formerly lived princes of the island.

The old Spaniard's heart was broken by his exile. His proud spirit was subdued, and he had become a child again; and the child of his bosom, the young Constanza Velasquez, was alone the solace of his age and solitude. But the nephew turned upon his benefactor, and, like the fabled serpent, stung the bosom that nourished him.

The hour of vespers had long passed, and Constanza knelt by the couch of her father.

Her figure was round, finely developed, and displayed to advantage by a laced jacket or bodice of black satin, enriched with a deep lace border, and closely fitting her shape. The curve of her shoulders was faultless, terminating in arms that would have haunted Canova in his dreams. On either wrist sparkled a diamond button confining the bodice at the cuffs. At both shoulders it was also clasped by a star of emeralds. Her fine raven hair was drawn back and arranged in the form of a crest of tresses, falling around her finely-turned head. A single white flower was secured in a rich curl above her forehead, by a gold-wrought comb, inlaid with many-colored stones. Over her head was thrown a white mantilla or veil, fastened on the comb by a pearl pin, so disposed as to fall down the back, to the feet of the wearer; yet it could be readily brought forward and dropped over the whole person. At this time it was gathered in folds, and hung gracefully on her left arm.

In her left hand she held a diamond crucifix, suspended from her neck by a massive gold chain, each link in the shape of a cross. Upon her right arm reposed the majestic head of her venerable parent, her delicate fingers playing with the silvery ringlets that flowed about his

neck and curled upon his massive forehead. His features were sharp and rigid with illness and settled grief; and his dark eye was lusterless as he gazed up into the face of his child.

"Have you said your prayers to-night, my daughter?"

"I have, dear father; and they ascended for your recovery. Oh, that the sweet Mother of our Savior would grant answers to my prayers!" she said, looking upward devotionally.

"She will, she will, Constanza," replied the aged man, "for yourself, but not for me! I have lived my allotted space. I must soon leave you, child. Be prepared for it, my daughter. Listen! I dreamed this afternoon that I saw the blessed Virgin, and she was the image of yourself!"

"Nay, father, let not your love for your poor sinful Constanza lead you to sin in your language," interrupted his daughter.

"So, so, but yet hear me, child," he interrupted, impatiently; "when I gazed upon her, wondering she was so like yourself, she changed, and, instead of you, I beheld your mother! How much like her you look just now, my child! Bend down, and let me kiss your brow." The fair girl bent her brow to her father's cheek, her dark locks mingling with his white hair.

"You do not remember your mother," he said, after a moment's affectionate embrace; "poor child! she was very beautiful. Your lofty brow is hers—the same penciled arch—the same drooping lid—and, when you smile, I almost call you, 'my Isabel.'"

"Am I so like my sainted mother, father? I wish I could recollect her or recall a feature," she said, placing her finger on her lips in the attitude of thought—"but no, no, it is vain!" she added, shaking her head mournfully, "her image is gone forever."

"Oh, no, not forever, my child; you shall meet her again in heaven."

Suddenly a cloud of sorrow passed across his troubled features, and grasping in his trembling and withered fingers the hand of his daughter, he said, in an earnest manner:

"Constanza, I feel that I cannot leave you, my unprotected dove, in this sinful world alone. What will become of you, my child, when I am gone? Heberto!" and the old man's eye flashed with anger as he repeated the name. "Beware of Heberto! Oh that the proud name of Velasquez should be dishonored by such a branch! Fear him, my child, as you would the adder that winds his glistening folds along your path;" and the old man clasped his skeleton fingers upon the sparkling crucifix which lay upon his breast, and, after remaining silent for a few moments, lifted his aged eyes to Heaven and said, "Holy Mary! take her—she is thy child. I, a poor penitent worm of the dust, here and on my dying bed, give up to thee my child—my only beloved child. Thou hast her mother in Heaven. Oh, keep her daughter while on earth! Mary, Mother! in the language of thy dying son, I say, 'Mother, behold thy daughter!'" The venerable man, who in his momentary devotion had raised himself from the sustaining arm of his daughter, as he uttered the last words, fell back upon the pillow exhausted.

"Agata! Agata!" shrieked the deeply affected and terrified girl. "Come—hasten—my father is dying."

The door of the ante-chamber burst open, and the tall figure of young Heberto Velasquez stood before her as she turned to look for her aged attendant, wrapped in a dark-blue cloak, and his features shaded by a drooping sombrero.

"Ha, my charming cousin! what has tuned that pretty voice so high?" he said, in a gay, yet unpleasant tone; at the same time coming forward, and bending gracefully down, he passed his arm around the waist of the lovely girl.

The maiden sprang as if a demon had laid his hand upon her.

"Heberto! Senor Velasquez!" and she stood before him as she spoke, her eyes flashing with maidenly indignation, her cheek glowing with insulted modesty, and her majestic figure and attitude like that of a seraph whom Satan had dared to tempt. "What mean you, sir? Begone! Would you press your hateful suit to the daughter, over the corpse of her father? Begone, I hate you!—more than I have ever loved—I now hate you! Oh, shame, shame! that I should ever have loved THEE!" and her lip, eye, and brow expressed withering scorn.

"Leave me, sir!" she added, as she saw that he moved not. But the bold and unblushing intruder, although his eye quailed before the proud look of the maiden, stood with folded arms, a fierce brow, and malicious lip, gazing upon her, as she turned to bathe the aged temples of the unconscious invalid, and restore him to animation. "Leave me, sir! Oh, let not my father revive, and find you here. It will kill him. You know he cannot endure you, sir, since you brought that fatal will for him to sign."

"Ha! do you throw it in my teeth, pretty one? But prithee tell me, when first learned you the part of tragedy queen? Nombre de

Dios, my pretty cousin! but you play it excellently well."

"Scorner! insulter! away! Oh that the count were here to chastise insolence!"

"The count!" slowly repeated Velasquez, grinding the hated appellation between his glittering teeth, as he slowly articulated it.

At this moment the old man unclosed his eyes. "Go, sir, go—would you murder him?" she exclaimed, and her dark eye flashed with anger as she spoke.

"He will die full soon enough when his ingots are gone," replied Velasquez, scornfully.

"I will go, my queenly cousin: but the time, perhaps, may not be far off, when you will sue for this same Velasquez to stay, and with clasped hands and tearful eyes pray him to speak you kindly; then will he remember this evening. Adios, estrella mia!"

With a firm and rapid pace he passed through the hall, and traversed the deserted apartments of the large mansion, his way lighted by the moon, which poured floods of radiance in at the open and shutterless windows. Opening and closing carefully after him, a door which communicated with the opposite wing, he descended a broken staircase to a dark vault beneath, and, unlocking a small door concealed on the outside by thick shrubbery, pushed aside the bushes, and stood in the moonlight.

"By the blessed Baptista!" he exclaimed, as he emerged from the secret portal, "if these men betray me! Yet, without me they cannot hunt out the old dotard's hoard. But if I am to be made the buccaneer's tool, you have lost your wits, Velasquez, if he shall not be yours." And the dark plotter against a helpless old man and his lovely and unprotected child smiled inwardly at the pleasant thoughts his fertile brain conjured up as, pacing to and fro beneath the shade of a large tamarind tree, which grew near that wing of the mansion, he impatiently awaited the arrival of the buccaneers.

"What can keep them?" he muttered. "It is a full half-hour since they answered my signal. Cæsar has been long absent! The black loiterer should have had them here, ere now."

"A shrine to thee, patron saint!" he suddenly exclaimed, devoutly kissing a medal suspended to his collar, "there is the square figure of my naked Adonis; and that tall figure! I know it well; seen, it is not soon forgotten; and there follow his sturdy villains. Now, Heberto Velasquez, thou art a made man!"

"Senores, buenos tardes," he said gayly advancing a few steps to meet the approaching party, as it emerged from the avenue, and traversed the terrace to the place of appointment. "My good Sir Captain, you are right gladly welcome to my poor domicile. If it please you, draw up your men in this shade, while we walk aside," he added, proffering his hand to the leader of the party.

"Sir Spaniard, pardon me that I grasp not the hand of a villain," replied the chief, without removing his hand from the cutlass-hilt upon which it mechanically rested. "Nay, start not! and leave that rapier in peace. I know you, though we have met but seldom. Thanks or courtesy I owe you not. This adventure is not of my seeking; it is the ill-begotten offspring of mutiny on the part of my men who will be in no other way appeased, and of treachery and base ingratitude on your own. Now, senor, to business; but let there be no friendship, and but few words between us."

Velasquez bit his lip in silence, and his inferior spirit shrank within him, as these biting words rung upon his ear, and the penetrating, self-possessed gaze of the pirate rested, while he spoke, full upon his features. His love of wealth, however, overcame any momentary struggles of wounded pride, and he replied in a less assured tone than he had used when first addressing his companion.

"It is well, senor," he said, carelessly, "if you choose to be captious on so slight a matter. But 'tis a blessed chance my pretty cousin heard not your romancing. I would wager my gold-headed rapier against the iron one you wear, that she would have loved you outright."

"Your sword is more likely to be lost in such a wager, than in one of battle," was the contemptuous reply; "but I come not here to lay wagers with you, Don Velasquez, either of coin or battle. To the matter in hand. We have no time for idle dallying, and I am not given to bandying words. For the privilege of taking possession of the large sum of money in the possession of your uncle, you are to be allowed one-half for your own personal use, on condition that, without turmoil or bloodshed, injury to persons or property, you conduct my men to his stronghold. These," he added, after a moment's silence, "are the terms we made in Kingston. Say I not well, senor?"

"There remains one other condition," replied Velasquez, with the caution of practiced villainy; "that mutual secrecy be sacredly observed between us, in relation to the removal of the treasures."

"Even so, wary Senor Velasquez; that the robbed old man may lay all censure upon the pirates, whom you would make the scapegoat of your treachery to your uncle, and curse them when he talks of his loss to his sympathizing

nephew, if, haply, he lives to relate the sad story. Well, lead on, senor, we follow," he added, sternly.

"Call two of your strongest men," said Velasquez; "let them accompany us, and command the rest to stand as close as possible with their weapons ready for use, in case of alarm; and enjoin upon them to observe the strictest silence. Now, sir, shall we move?"

"Theodore, be alert, our lives depend upon it," said the chief to his young attendant; and, followed by two of his men, he approached the secret opening guided by Velasquez, who had constructed it for his own private admission into the vault, when his lavish purse required replenishing.

Accident, in some of his visits to Jamaica had thrown him into the company of the commander of the schooner. Subsequently, a knowledge of a threatened mutiny among the pirates suggested to the dark-minded man a scheme, not only to gain wealth himself, without suspicion, or rather proof, of illegal acquisition, but to do the outlaw, whose fellowship, like the cur who is beaten, he coveted the more he was spurned, a favor that should purchase his goodwill.

Putting aside the thick clumps of the oleander, concealing the secret opening into the vault of the building, Velasquez and his companions entered the low-arched room communicating with the apartment above by the shattered staircase he had descended on quitting his cousin.

"It is too dark to place a foot! Are you provided with a lantern?" he inquired, in a whisper.

"Here is one," said the seaman nearest him, opening, at the same time, one side of the night-lantern with which nearly every man was provided.

The guide took it from him, and, passing round the stairs, opened a door he had purposely left unlocked, and entered a long and damp passage. The outlaw placed his hand upon his stiletto, and glanced with habitual watchfulness around him, as he approached its obscure and suspicious termination. At the end of the passage, they passed through another door, the key of which was in the lock, and entered a low-vaulted room, directly under the inhabited wing of the mansion.

The floor was paved with large flat stones, and, besides the door through which they entered, there was no perceptible outlet.

"Here is the room adjoining the money," said Velasquez, in a low, husky voice, with his face averted from the gaze of him whom he addressed. "Be silent; the least noise will betray us—Hark; did you not hear the report of a gun? No, it was a movement overhead."

The momentary suspicion and apprehension of detection, which are the attendants of guilt, passed off, and he continued:

"Look at this wall, sir! You see it is perfectly smooth; yet through it we pass to my uncle's gold-bags," he said, with a forced smile, as he shook off his fears and those qualms of conscience which tortured even his hardened spirit. Then, pressing against one of the sides of a large square stone, it turned on a concealed pivot half-way round, and displayed a narrow opening on either side.

"This is too small; we cannot pass through it," said the pirate, now speaking for the first time since entering the vault.

Without replying, Velasquez pressed the sides of the lower stones in the same manner, and two very dark, narrow passages, nearly the height of a man and so wide that one could pass sideways, were opened in the wall.

Holding the lamp so that it would illuminate the interior, they discovered a narrow spiral staircase leading both into the room, where the outlet was concealed by a private door, and from the spot where they stood into a subterranean vault beneath—constituting a medium of communication between the upper room and the vault, and from the staircase, by revolving the stones, to the exterior of the building, through the gallery by which the party had entered.

The little room, or cell, in which they now were was arched overhead, the walls were constructed of solid masonry, and there was visible neither outlet nor inlet save, at the foot of the stairs, that which admitted them.

Around the room, which was about eight feet square, stood several antique marble urns, blackened by age and dampness, once constituting a part of the ornaments of the villa grounds in the days of its grandeur. These urns were covered with slabs, once capitals and pedestals.

A heavy cedar box, with a cover loosely thrown over it, stood on one side, and on a raised floor were candlesticks, urns, a tall crucifix, and many vessels for the altar and festal-board, all of massive silver.

"Mines of Peru! but here is a goodly display of wealth!" said the pirate, glancing his eye over the glittering array before him. "Let us see what these urns contain. Coin of silver! coin of silver! chains of gold! bracelets! glittering stones and gems of price!" said he, removing one after another the slabs which covered

them. "And here, in this strong box," he continued, displacing the lid, "what have we here? Holy Saint Peter! but here is a prince's ransom indeed!" and the rough corners of a heap of ingots sparkled with a thousand points in the rays of the lamp.

"Here, Senor Captain, is the prize you seek," said Velasquez exultingly, after waiting until he had surveyed the costly heaps. "Let your men take the box of ingots, the vessels of silver and the urns of golden chains, gems and bracelets; for my portion, leave me the remaining urns of dollars; though something less than what you share, I am content with them. But remember your oath of secrecy."

"That will I, Senor Velasquez," said the outlaw, in a lively tone; "and I consent to this division."

"Come, Senor Velasquez," he said abruptly, aloud, "let us to work. Here, Gaspar, you and Nicolas raise this box; it is weighty, but you were not blessed with the neck and shoulders of bulls for nothing. No! not move it! Then lighten it—there—that's well. Now bear it to the outside, and bid Theodore send Mateo and Carlos back with you—be silent and speedy."

The men, placing an open lantern upon the cover of the box to light them through the dark passages of the building, disappeared slowly up the stairs with their heavy burden.

CHAPTER VIII.

A STRANGE SCENE IN THE OLD VILLA.

AFTER Velasquez left the apartment of the insulted and distressed maiden, her firmness and womanly indignation forsook her with the object that called it into existence, and, burying her face in the pillow of her father's couch she wept bitterly.

"Daughter! Constanza! why do you not speak to me?" called her aged parent, in a tremulous voice, his consciousness gradually returning. "My child weeping! Oh! do not weep for me, my dear Constanza. I—am—better—much—quite—quite well," he feebly articulated in a broken voice, which contradicted his words. "It grieves me to see your eyes in tears; let me take your hand in mine, mi alma. Tell me why those tears?" he inquired, with paternal kindness.

"Nay, I weep not, father," replied the lovely girl, brushing the fast-falling tears from her eyelashes; now that you are well, I am happy, very happy," and she laid affectionately her dimpled hand upon her parent's fevered brow.

"Oh, I have dreamed a fearful dream, mi alma, suddenly exclaimed her father, starting with the recollection. "I dreamed that Velasquez, with a guilty lip, sought to desecrate your virgin cheek—"

"Nay, nay, my dear father, it was but a dream," interrupted the blushing girl, with a nervous rapidity in the tones of her voice. "Will you not sleep? The hour wears late, and I would have you repose. Oh, my father, try and sleep for your Constanza's sake—live for your child," she said, as a sense of her loneliness, if he should be taken from her, coming vividly to her mind, alarmed her.

"I will, I will, daughter. Do you not recollect, sweet wife, when first I called you mine? You were young then, and beautiful; 'tis a great while ago, and yet you are still as lovely as when I claimed you my beloved bride. But methinks time has changed me greatly since! Why do you weep, Isabel? We are not all alone. Our little daughter is with us. Shall not Constanza be our earthly blessing? When I am old and feeble, will she not bless my gray hairs?"

"Father! oh, my dear father! do you not know your daughter? your own Constanza, who speaks to you?" cried the distressed girl, as, from his wandering language, the conviction of her father's danger pressed upon her mind.

"Yes, my child," said the venerable man, recovering from his temporary alienation of mind, "you are indeed Constanza!"

A low murmuring, apparently from the vault beneath, aroused them from their endearing interchange of affection.

"Hist, child! what sounds are those?"

She raised her head, and listened: and the ringing of metal and whispered words came up from below.

"Blessed Virgin! there is mischief near," she cried, in alarm.

"Jesu, Jesu Maria! my ingots! my gold!" exclaimed the old man, clinging with the penurious characteristic of opulent dotage to that wealth he could no longer use. "There are robbers below, my child! Oh, my Constanza, you are a beggar."

With suddenly bestowed strength he sprang from his couch, and, seizing a pistol hanging near him, pressed with his thumb the knob from which he took it. A narrow door, hitherto concealed by the peculiar architecture of the room, flew open, and displayed the winding stairway leading to the vault; at the same instant a light flashed full in his haggard face from the aperture.

"We are discovered!" shouted a voice from below.

"It is the old man!" exclaimed Velasquez; "finish him—dead men tell no tales;" and the

click of a pistol followed the words of the speaker.

"What mean you, Sir Spaniard," interposed the deep voice of the pirate; "would you do murder? What fear you from a childish old man? For shame! put up your pistol. Be lively, men, be lively," he added, with a quicker tone, "and convey this last load to the men without. Stand back, Senor Velasquez," he cried in a stern tone; "attempt to pass this stair, and, by St. Barabbas! little service shall this night's treachery do you. Cielos! what is this!" he exclaimed, as the blood spouted from the temples of the Spaniard, while the report of a pistol, leveled by the old man at the scarcely seen marauders, thundered in the close vault like the explosion of a mine. Velasquez sprang backward, and fell dead upon the urns of silver, for which he had sold both honor and life, with a fearful execration upon his livid lip.

"Thus perish treachery by the hand of its victim!" exclaimed the pirate. "This is likely to be no small night's work; stand where you are, senor," he added, addressing Don Velasquez, who was descending the staircase, "there shall no harm come nigh you; the man you had most to fear has received the reward of his deeds. Stay your hand, old man! do you dare me with steel?" he demanded, as he struck up from his hands a glittering rapier, he had seized to defend the stairway after discharging the pistol.

"What noise is that without? one—two—three pistols! my signal! Ho, Carlos, Mateo, what?" he emphatically demanded, as two assistants rushed past the old man, and leaped into the vault. "What, villains, what?" and his voice rung through the passages.

"We are surprised, sir! The report of the pistol, and the shrieks of the old man, were answered by a shout from a distance. Immediately a blue light illuminated the barracks, and a musket was discharged to give the alarm. Just as I came in, I could already hear the tramp of horses, and the clanging of armor along the highway. There must have been mounted troops abroad, to be on horse so soon." This information was given with rapidity and energy by the seaman.

"It is as I feared," said the chief, calmly, "the dragoons are upon us!" and, drawing his cutlass, "follow!" he cried to his men. As the speediest way of gaining the outside of the building, he sprang up the stairs into the room above, gently putting the venerable Spaniard aside, as he emerged into the chamber.

"Save, oh save my father!" shrieked his daughter, who had clung to his neck during the scene we have described, striving to prevent him from rushing below, and who now threw herself upon his breast, interposing her person as a shield between the pirate's cutlass and her parent's bosom. "Save, oh spare his life!" and she extended her arms imploringly. "Take, take all, but let my father live."

"Fear not, fair maiden," replied the chief, in a tone of deep respect, that fell like the voice of hope upon her heart, struck with her extraordinary loveliness; "do not be alarmed; your lives and honor are sacred in the hands of Lafitte!"

"LAFITTE! oh God!" shrieked the maiden, who raised her eyes to heaven, clasped her snowy fingers, and would have fallen had not the outlaw caught her in his arms.

"Oh, my daughter, my daughter!" cried the helpless old man, weakened and nervous from excitement, "what will become of you?" and, falling upon his knees before the pirate, he supplicated his mercy.

"Oh, take all, take all—gold, jewels, all, but leave me my Constanza—my only child! the blessed image of her mother!" and the furrowed cheeks of the old father as he pleaded for his child, were running with tears. "For the sake of thy mother," he continued with energy, "for the sake of the Blessed Virgin, take not away my only child!" and the old man clasped the knees of the buccaneer.

"Venerable senor, rise up; your daughter shall not be taken from you," replied Lafitte, tenderly raising the prostrate old man from the ground.

When Constanza felt that the pirate supported her form, by a strong mental effort she rose superior to her weakness and prepared to bound from him; but when she saw that he did not detain her and spoke kindly and soothingly to her father, she thought a voice of so much tenderness could not belong to so bad a man as the pirate had been represented. And when he placed her father's form in her arms she looked up into his face with greater confidence.

"Senor, I will believe you—we will trust in you; for, oh! what else can we do? but go, do go from us! take the gold you came for, and depart! Leave me with my father; we can be happy without wealth; he is too old to use it, and I—I care not for it—take it; it is yours, freely bestowed."

"Maiden," he replied, with an embarrassed air and a flush like shame suffusing his brow, while the shouts of the dragoons approaching the villa rung unheeded in his ears. "Maiden, I thank you, and feel grateful for your confidence; it is not ill-placed. The treasure it is

out of my power to command or I would return it; it is in the hands of my men, and at their disposal, not mine. But here," he added, after an instant's hesitation, taking her hand, which she instantly withdrew, "here is a treasure dearer to me than all else beside!" and he gazed with impassioned, yet respectful tenderness, upon the pale features of the surprised girl.

"Pardon me," he added with earnestness, as he observed the maidenly embarrassment his abrupt address produced, "pardon me, that I make use of such untimely language at this moment; but there is a tumult abroad—I hear the ringing of steel, the shouts of fighting men, and the firing of musketry. I must speak to you now! Listen to me, lady, I beseech! See, I am a suppliant at your feet!"

"Oh, senor, I implore you, think not of me! go! your men call their chief! Go—you will be taken and your life sacrificed."

As she spoke, a rich color played over her cheek and mantled her brow, and her dark upraised eyes betrayed deep and strange interest in the safety of the pirate—the result of a struggle between resentment and kindness in her bosom.

"Maiden, unless your lips pronounce forgiveness—without one ray of hope, I cannot go. Speak, senora, but one word."

"I do forgive you, senor, but leave me. Hark! that shout! delay another moment, and you are lost."

"I will obey you, lady, and leave my cause to you and Heaven!" he said, seizing and pressing her hand to his lips; then, as the noise without increased, he drew a pistol from his belt and casting back a lingering look, expressive of mingled hope and fear, while a smile mantled his handsome features, he rushed from the apartment onto the terrace.

The next moment she heard his footsteps dying away in the direction of the sounds of contest, which, from the firing and cries of the combatants, seemed to be already fierce and bloody.

Constanza, as the pirate disappeared, laid her father's head upon a pillow, and leaving him to the troubled sleep into which he had sunk from exhaustion, leaned from the window and looked forth upon the moon, which, in its nightly watch, never shone upon a sweeter face.

The sounds of conflict had receded, till they were lost in the distance, and all was still and motionless, save a few white clouds sailing along the skies, a slight waving of the foliage about the window, and the irregular heaving of her bosom.

She stood and communed with her own thoughts.

"Strange! strange!" she said, mentally, "but that voice is so rich and full of tenderness! how my heart bounded when I heard it! How singularly it affected me! and can he be Lafitte! that dreadful man! proscribed, with a price set upon his head! hated, shunned and feared by all! Yet, how noble looking he is, and so humane! And his eyes, how dark and piercing they are! He is certainly very handsome! But," and her cheek paled as she gave utterance to her thoughts, "holy Virgin, I fear him—the language in which he addressed me! oh, lost, lost, Constanza! If beloved by this outlaw, better have been the bride of Velasquez, than the—oh, dear Madonna, help now, for I know not what to do!" and covering her face with her hands, the tears forced their way through her taper fingers.

"Oh that Alphonse were here," she at length continued; "my own Alphonse! Dreary weeks has he been absent, and yet he comes not. How have I watched day after day for the glimmer of his white sail upon the horizon."

Suddenly the report of a pistol, followed by the sound of running feet, and now and then a cry, as of men pursuing and pursued, startled her from her reverie, and instantly, the scenes she had gone through passed vividly before her mind, and she awoke, at once, to a full consciousness of the loneliness and utter helplessness of her situation.

Hastening, as the noise increased, to the side of her father, as if protection could be found in his feeble arm, she awaited the coming danger. The sounds came nearer, and the hasty tread of armed men was heard upon the terrace, followed by a heavy fall, as if one had leaped, at a bound, from the sward upon the piazza. She hardly had time to move from the surprised attitude in which those appalling sounds arrested her, or conjecture their nature, when, springing in through the window which she had just left to cling to her father, Lafitte once more stood before her.

His eye was illuminated with a fierce light; his lip was compressed, and blood was upon his brow and upon his hand, which grasped a dripping cutlass.

The terrified girl shrieked as this sudden apparition appeared before her, and fell senseless upon the floor. The outlaw, though closely pursued, paused for an instant with indecision, and then hastily raised her with the air of one who had, in the emergency of the moment, decided upon a certain mode of conduct. Scarcely had he lifted her drooping form upon his muscu-

lar arm, when the window was filled with soldiers, thirsty for his blood.

"Back, sirs; or, by Heaven, I will bury this weapon in the maiden's bosom!" he cried, in resolute tone, and he grasped his cutlass near the point, shortening it like a stiletto, and elevated his arm, as if to strike the threatened blow.

The soldiers hesitated to enter.

"What, cowards! do you value a girl's life when Lafitte is the prize?" cried their leader; "follow me!" and he sprang in at the window—to fall back upon his men, a corpse, while the report of a pistol, discharged behind Lafitte, rung through the room.

"Ha, Carlos! is that you?" he said, looking round and discovering whence the shot was fired.

"Yes, senor," he hastily replied; "escape through the old man's door—down the stair—and out through the passage. I have just passed through it, and the coast is yet clear. I will keep these red devils at bay."

"Good, my Carlos. But the old man? We cannot leave him," and he pointed to the couch.

"Little will he know whether he be taken or left. The old man's commission has run out," he said, laying his hand upon the cold temples of the aged Spaniard. "Dead—dead enough, senor!"

"Poor, poor child, how will she bear it?" said Lafitte, with interest. "How now?" he added, quickly, "here they come like so many bloodhounds."

The soldiers without, who had been for some minutes engaged in loud and noisy altercation among themselves, as to who should enter first and seize the outlaw, now hailed with a shout the sound of hoofs, and the ringing of sabers and spurs, announcing a reinforcement.

"This fair girl must be my breastplate—dash out that light, and follow me!" cried the pirate; and springing through the secret door, he disappeared with his lovely burden. Carlos darted after him, and hastily closed the door, which received a shower of bullets from half a dozen horse-pistols, leveled at his retreating form.

"Well done, Carlos!" said Lafitte, approvingly. "Now open your lantern and lead the way."

Rapidly traversing the dark passages, they soon left behind them the sounds of rage and disappointment, vented by their pursuers on entering the room and finding their victims had escaped in some mysterious manner.

"That torch here, William," said the dragoon officer; "how think you he could have escaped? There is no sign of an outlet here. He must be in league with Beezlebob to have slipped away thus. Ha! who is this—old Don Velasquez! And dead, too! Poor old soldier!—money, daughter, and life, all in one hour! But mount, men—mount! To horse! This outlaw has escaped by some subterranean passage in this old Spanish house, and will double upon us like an old hare. Ho! surround the house. To horse!"

Leaping from the window he bounded across the gallery, followed by half a score of his followers, mounted, and made a rapid sweep around the dwelling.

But before his pursuers had taken horse, Lafitte traversed the subterranean passages of the building, emerged from the secret door into the bright moonlight, and with the speed of the hunted stag, crossed the open lawn and entered the avenue leading toward the sea-shore. This path was exposed for some distance to the eye of an observer from the villa, and as the dragoons completed their survey of the grounds immediately surrounding it, and met at the end of the wing, near the tamarind-tree, the white robes of the maiden glanced upon the eyes of the leader.

"As I thought! On—there is our game," he cried, burying his spurs deep into his horse's flanks and dashing down the avenue, followed at speed by his troops.

"Now, captain, we are at the termination of the grounds, and here is the gate; stoop, sir," said Carlos, darting, as he spoke, under the hedge, from which their ebony guide had crawled early in the evening, to conduct them on their expedition.

"Thank God! we are at last safe—they cannot pass that barrier," exclaimed Lafitte, as he paused a moment, to breathe, on the outer side of the hedge, "and this fair maiden!" he added, with sympathy, "she is yet unconscious."

The fugitives had nearly gained the cliff, when a sudden galloping on their left told them their pursuers had found a way to clear the hedge. Looking back, they discovered their arms gleaming through the trees, and the whole troop dashing forward in full cry.

Drawing his belt tighter around him, bringing his cutlass hilt to his grasp, and changing his still lifeless burden to the other arm, with renewed speed the outlaw bounded through the dark glades of the forest. Every moment lessened his distance from his pursuers, and, as he was ascending a slight eminence, commanding a view of the sea, and near the verge of the cliff beneath which their vessel lay, the foremost horseman was within pistol-shot of them.

"Surrender, Sir Pirate! surrender!" he shouted, as he leveled his long pistol, and deeper plunged his spurs into the sides of his foaming

steed. The next instant horse and rider would have been upon the buccaneer, had he not drawn a pistol from his girdle, and, half turning his flight, fired upon the dragoon. The ball sunk into the forehead of the horse, which with one plunge forward, fell lifeless upon his rider; and the contents of his pistol, which he discharged while falling, passed through the cap of the pirate. The remainder of the troop now came up, but the fate of their comrade for a moment checked the pursuit.

"Hold there, for your lives, men!" shouted their commanding officer, who had been outridden by his troop, and now rode up—"hold, do not fire, but surround and take him. It were better he should escape, than that fair girl be injured. A hundred guineas to him," he added, "who captures him dead or alive—but if the lady suffers harm, let him who gives the blow beware!"

The soldiers sullenly returned their pistols to their holsters and drew their swords. But there were now other objects on which to exercise them; for at this instant appeared a party of the pirate's crew, armed with cutlasses and fire-arms. They had left the schooner, and marched inland, on hearing the signal for succor made by their comrades, and were returning without meeting with them—they having, with the exception of Lafitte, gained the shore by another route, with the loss of two of their number shot down by the dragoons, and a portion of their booty. Striking their cutlasses against their pistols, with a loud noise, and cheering each other with shouts, they came on at a rapid pace; and before the dragoons could draw and cock their fire-arms to meet this new enemy, they were fired upon with fatal effect by the advancing buccaneers. Here and there, a rider fell from his steed at the discharge, while the wounded animals fled with wild cries through the forest.

"On, on! avenge our comrades!" cried the pirates, pressing forward to close with their foes; creeping under the horses, and passing their cutlasses up through their bodies; dragging the riders by main force from their seats, or springing behind them, and hurling them bodily to the ground.

The leader of the buccaneers, did not, however, derive any personal advantage from this reinforcement; for the captain of dragoons, dismounting, as the pirates made their desperate charge, cried, "Have at you, Sir Pirate, for my own pleasure, and rescue of that lady," advancing as he spoke with his drawn sword upon his antagonist, who, from the time he had killed the horse and dismounted the dragoon, had stood at bay, facing his foes, determined to fight his way, step by step, to his vessel.

His eye lighted up with pleasure, as he heard the challenge of the leader of the dragoons, a tall, gentlemanly-looking Englishman, with an Herculean frame, and a striking military air.

Anxious to get safe to his schooner, his lovely shield—whom he internally resolved should be forever his, although he had at first seized her to favor his escape, when, closely pursued, he retreated to the villa—he still moved slowly backward, facing his advancing foe. On his left arm he supported Constanza, her unconscious head laid upon his shoulder, while Lafitte wielded in his right hand his formidable cutlass, upon which he received the ringing steel of the officer.

In vain the Englishman used every device of art, and each favorite ruse, and as uselessly did he follow blow on blow, with tremendous force. The pirate coolly received his weapon upon his cutlass at every stroke, and, acting only on the defensive, still retreated steadily to the verge of the cliff.

"Now have at you, Sir Englishman!" he cried, as he reached the head of the defile leading to his vessel. "Now have at you, in my turn; if you love Lafitte so well, he will give you a lasting mark of his friendship. So, there!" he added, suddenly and emphatically, as the officer, at first making a feint, aimed a heavy blow at his head, which he intended should be his *coup de grace*; "so, there!" and while he received his antagonist's sword upon his own guard, by a peculiar motion, with the same movement of his arm, he struck it from his grasp, and, making a sweep over his head, his rapid cutlass whistling through the air, descended, and nearly severed the left arm of the Englishman from his body. The officer groaned, and fell heavily upon the ground, while Lafitte descended with rapidity the narrow defile to his schooner.

"Ho! Theodore! are you there, my boy?" he said, as he saw the slight form of the youth upon the deck; "receive this lady, and convey her to the starboard state-room, and try to restore her. Ricardo, be out of this place as soon as possible."

"The anchor is apeak, sir," replied his lieutenant; "and the boat is ahead with a towline."

As soon as the last man touched the deck, the commander uttered his orders for making sail with rapidity.

"Hoist away the jib and mainsail; set the topgallantsails and royals; we must make

everything tell! Give way, men!" he shouted to the manned boat ahead; "steadily—there she moves—bear off from that crag—bend to those oars, men—now she moves! Pull heartily and cheerily, or we shall be intercepted by a guarda costa!"

"A curse upon this night's work," he said to himself, turning and walking aft as the schooner yielded to the efforts of the crew. "This is well called the Devil's Punch-Bowl, and he is likely to have us all as ingredients for his next bumper."

In a few moments, the schooner, under the sweeps and the slightly drawing royals, glided swiftly over the water, and soon moved through the narrow entrance of the basin into the open bay.

CHAPTER IX.

AFTER THE CONFLICT.

THE moon was just fading in the western skies, and the well-defined outlines of the peak of St. Catharine was delicately gilded by the yet unrisen sun, the morning subsequent to the scenes and adventures related in the preceding chapters, when a white spot on the horizon attracted the attention of the wounded officer of dragoons, as, under the refreshing influence of the morning breeze, he recovered from the swoon into which he had fallen from loss of blood, after being struck down by the pirate.

Casting his eyes over the sea, he appeared to watch the speck with much interest; and surprise was manifest on his features, when, instead of receding, he perceived that it enlarged, and evidently approached the island.

"Can the buccaneer be returning?" he exclaimed; "but he might as well finish me, as leave me so!" and as he spoke, he raised, with a melancholy smile, his mutilated arm. "Well, Captain Adair," he continued, "you may hang your sword upon the willow now—this Lafitte has done for you! But that cannot be the pirate," he said, in a changed and eager tone; "his was a schooner, although she carried royals, like a sloop-of-war. Hal! there is another sail in her wake—a smaller craft—what can they be? Now the larger veers a little—she's a ship under topsails, and the other is a schooner, perhaps a tender. But yet he's not a John Bull!"

After a few minutes' silence, during which the anguish of his wound overcame every other feeling, he continued:

"It is either a Frenchman or an American; but what can she want here? Ha, there fly monsieur's colors!"

The vessel which had first attracted the notice of the officer was now plainly visible, about two leagues from the land. She was a large frigate, displaying the ensign of France at her peak, and the same national distinction also fluttered at the mast-head of the schooner. Standing into the bay before a free breeze, with royals and sky-sails towering aloft, and lower studding-sails set on both sides, in less than an hour from the time she appeared a mere speck, like the flash of a sea-gull's wing on the horizon, she had passed the capes of the bay. Running close into the land, and furling one sail after another, she gracefully rounded to, and, accompanied by the tender, came to an anchor opposite the entrance of the "Devil's Punch Bowl," and within the shadow a gigantic rock, to which nature had given the outline of a huge granite fortress.

As the last sail was furled closely to its yard, the dragoon saw a small boat put off from the frigate, manned by four men and a steersman. An officer in naval undress, with the insignia of the rank of a French captain upon his breast and collar, leaned back in the stern sheets, as the boat moved swiftly over the water, gazing upward upon the rock, rearing its dark mass against the sky—admiring its castellated outline, and pinnacles springing several hundred feet into the air.

The oarsmen pulled rapidly in to the beach at the base of the cliff, whose projecting verge, as they passed into its dark shadow, suddenly hid them from the eyes of the wounded officer.

"Lay to your oars briskly, men—one strong pull more—there we strike!" said the French officer, as, with a grating sound, the boat grounded upon the beach, running half her length out of the water, on to the hard, white sand.

Shipping their oars, the men sprung out, and respectfully raising their caps, as their officer passed by them in stepping ashore, turned to secure the boat from the action of the tide. Delaying a moment to arm themselves with sabers and pistols, which they took from the stern, they hastily buckled them around their waists, and stood ready to follow him.

While his men were thus engaged, under the command of the coxswain—a mere boy in the uniform of a midshipman—the officer stood with folded arms, and a thoughtful eye, gazing with all a seaman's pride upon his motionless frigate, as, towering above the dark hull, her lofty masts and slender spars appeared drawn with the accuracy of pencilling against the sky.

He was a slightly-formed man, rather below than above the medium height of men, with a

strikingly-elegant figure, finely displayed by his blue frock and dark-green cloak, falling negligently back from his shoulders in graceful folds. His forehead was high and expansive, over which, as he raised his velvet cap to meet the cool breezes from the sea, flowed, with almost feminine luxuriance, thick clusters of dark auburn hair. That softness of character which this peculiarity anticipated was, however, contradicted by the intellectual fullness of his brow and the firm expression of his blue eye, which, although it might droop before a maiden's gaze, could flash proudly back the glance of a foe.

A lock of his hair seemed trained to lie over his forehead, relieving the otherwise too oval contour of his face. His complexion, naturally fair, was a little sun-browned, by exposure to the sun and seas of many climates; and a healthy hue glowed upon his cheeks. His upper lip was graced with a mustachio of the same rich color as his hair. His lips were full, and rather voluptuous in their finely-curved outline, but without any approach to sensuality. The general expression of his features, when in repose, as they now were, was intellectual, and, perhaps, melancholy. He might be above thirty years of age, though the juvenile and extreme beauty of his noble forehead, the mantling cheek, and the curve of his mouth and chin, which a Hebe might have envied, would indicate that he had seen even fewer summers.

"We are ready, monsieur," said the youthful coxswain.

"Follow me then, Montville; the men may all remain; and see," he said, turning to them, "that you make no brawl with these Englishmen as before! The soldiers who felt your Gallic knocks may take occasion to follow up their quarrel. If they approach, shove off at once, and lie on your oars beyond musket-shot."

"Ay, ay, sir," replied the men, putting their shoulders to the boat, and floating her; while their commanding officer, followed by his favorite midshipman, crossed the smooth belt of sand, and, winding rapidly around the base of the cliff, came to a part where the descent was less precipitous.

Their way lay by natural paths, through clumps of foliage of every variety and brilliancy of color.

They had now reached the hedge of aloes and palmetto, forming the boundary of the grounds surrounding the villa of Velasquez.

Winding around it in a direction contrary to that taken by the depredators of the preceding night, they soon came to a latticed gateway, partly hid in the hedge, and close to the unoccupied wing of the mansion. The gate, which his young companion was hastening forward to unlock with a small key handed him by the officer, was battered in pieces, and the dead body of a seaman lay on the threshold, with a fragment of a dragoon's sword half buried in his head.

"Mon Dieu! what mischief has been here?" exclaimed the officer, stooping to examine the features of the dead man. "He is a Spaniard, and, by his garb and arms, no doubt, a pirate. Cold, and stiff!" he added, touching his temples, "he has been long dead. Allons! allons!" he cried to his companion, bounding through the broken gateway—"God preserve dear Constanza!" and, drawing their swords, they both rushed up the avenue, every few rods of which exhibited traces of a recent and severe fight.

By the side of a slain horse lay a dead dragoon, grasping convulsively a wounded Spanish sailor. Although a deep gash cleft his cheek, he still lived; while a consciousness of the death-grapple in which he was held, overcoming the pain of his wound, writhed his features into a terrible expression of horror; his black, lustrous eyes, rolled wildly in their sockets, and his feeble fingers vainly worked to release the vise-like grasp of the dead man.

"Oh, senores, for the love of God, help me! Ay de mi—Ay de mi!—Ave Maria!" and he extended his arms, imploringly.

The officer arrested his rapid progress to the house; his humane feelings overcoming his desire to proceed; and, perhaps, he was at the same time anxious to learn from him the nature and full extent of the bloody signs around him.

"Hold, Montville! let us aid this wretch," he said, moved by the imploring language of the sufferer. "What a fearful embrace!"

With their united efforts, but not without the exercise of great muscular exertion, they disengaged the arms of the dead man from around the living body of his foe—who, during the slow-moving hours of the long night, had borne such unspeakable tortures. How fearfully was the dead avenged! clasping in his close embrace the breathing body of his slayer!

"What, monsieur?" inquired his deliverer, as the buccaneer grasped his cloak, and gave way to a shower of tears, unable to express, in language, his gratitude; "what means all this bloody work? You, it seems, should know something of it!" and his voice and eye betrayed the intensest excitement as he spoke. "Speak, speak!" he reiterated, as the man held up his clasped hands in silence; "answer, man! or, by Heaven! I will give you to a worse fate than the arms of this dead soldier."

The man shuddered at the allusion, and his eyes glared with terror.

"Mercy! senor, mercy!" he cried, clinging to his cloak, and looking up imploringly into his face.

The impatient officer drew a pistol from his bosom, with a threatening air; when the terrified Spaniard, with difficulty and hesitation, articulated:

"Lafitte!"

"He has been *here*?" rapidly interrogated the officer. "Where is Don Velasquez, and his daughter?"

"Yo no sé, senor; yo no sé, yo no sé—"

The officer, awaiting no more, freed his cloak from his grasp and darted forward passing pistols, cutlasses, and a portion of the pirates' booty, thrown away in their flight. The sward was cut up with the feet of horses, and blood reddened the avenue in many places. In a few moments after leaving the Spanish sailor, they ascended the terrace, and came, at once, upon the scene of the severest conflict. With a sword in one hand, and a pistol in the other, the officer leaped over the dead bodies of two soldiers and a headless seaman, and, rushing to the front of the house, flew along the piazza, to an open window in the further wing. The sight that here met his eyes appalled him!

Upon a couch in the extremity of the apartment, lay the corpse of the old man, cold and rigid. The floor was covered with pools of blood, and a dragoon, with a pistol-wound in the forehead, lay dead under the window.

A deadly sickness came over him as he gazed on the horrid spectacle, his hands fell powerless by his side, and, overcome with emotion, he leaned against the window for support.

His young companion sprang into the room and laid his hand upon the heart of the old man; but pulsation had ceased!

"He has been a long while dead," he said.

"Dead!" mournfully repeated the officer, half unconsciously, "dead, is he—and poor Constanza! is she living? or worse?" he added, in a hollow voice. "Oh, merciful Heaven, blast me not at one stroke!"

"To the rescue, to the rescue!" he suddenly shouted, after a moment's silence, in a voice like a trumpet, "ho! my men, all!—Alas! alas! Constanza!" he added, in a changed voice, "vain, vain; all in vain—but—there—is—revenge!" he said, slowly, "I will avenge you, terribly avenge you," and his eyes lighted up with a fierce light, his form dilated, and his glowing features wore a fearful sublimity as he spoke.

Approaching the couch, he placed his hand upon the marble brow of the corpse.

"Senor Velasquez, your death and grievous wrongs shall be avenged. I make this cause of mine and yours a sacred one!" and he kissed, as he spoke, the cold forehead, and the crucifix, which, grasped in the old man's hand, lay upon his breast. "You have not died by ball or steel—deep griefs have killed you. You shall be avenged!"

"Ha! what now?" he exclaimed, as distant voices and the tramp of horses' feet fell upon his ear. Springing to the window, he saw, wheeling rapidly round the ruined wing of the building, a troop of horsemen, who drew up on the terrace. Their leader dismounted, and, followed by two or three of his men, hastily approached the gallery.

The Frenchman immediately stepped forth to meet him.

"What, whom have we here?" he exclaimed, cocking a pistol which he had drawn from his holsters, as he alighted: but, observing the gentlemanly air of the stranger, and detecting his naval attire, he modulated his tone to one of more courtesy.

"Your pardon, monsieur! you are the Count D'Oyley, commander of the French frigate in the bay, if I mistake not?"

The stranger bowed.

"This has been an unpleasant business," he continued; "a party of buccaneers, with Lafitte at their head, came last night in strong force, robbed the old man, who, also, I am told, is dead, shot his nephew, and carried off his daughter. We have been out, part of the night, in pursuit of them. Since our return, we find that, after a hard fight with another detachment, he escaped to his vessel with the old Don's child, and immediately put out to sea.

"Are you ill, sir?" he inquired, observing the face of the officer grow pale at the recital.

"No, monsieur, no!" replied the count, recovering himself; "I thank you for the interest you have taken in this affair. The old Castilian and his daughter were not unknown to me. He once saved me from a conspiracy aimed against my life in Mexico. He now lies in that room, dead—and his daughter—Oh, Alphonse, Alphonse, where were you in that evil hour?—But there is vengeance," said he, looking upward, "there is the just vengeance of Heaven, and I will be its instrument! Adieu, monsieur; I leave the burial of Senor Velasquez to your kindness. I must away! the business which brought me here is ended—alas, how ended! Adieu, monsieur," he continued, warmly pressing the hand of the sympathizing Englishman. Then hastily descending to the ter-

race, "Messieurs, adieu!" he added, raising his cap, as he passed the mounted dragoons; and then, accompanied by his young friend, he hastened to the shore.

After walking steadily onward for many minutes, they emerged from the forest onto the bluff, and, turning an angle in their path, encountered the officer whom Lafitte had wounded. He was slowly moving toward the villa, faint and weary.

"Gentlemen, for the love of God, a little water! I am dying of thirst!" he said, addressing them as they appeared.

Again the humanity of the stranger was called into exercise; and for the moment, forgetting his own sorrow in sympathy for the distressed soldier, he stopped, kindly supported him to the shade of a large tree, and dispatched his companion back, to communicate his situation to the party at the villa.

"Can you tell me aught of Lafitte?" he inquired of the wounded man, as they awaited his return.

"Much, much," he replied, "he has left his mark, as he calls it, here!" and pointing, as he spoke, to his mutilated arm, he attempted to smile.

"You saw him, then! Did he gain his vessel, as they tell me, with, with—" and he hesitated, while his chest heaved with emotion.

"Yes, I both saw and felt him! He fought like a tiger at bay, and a better swordsman never handled steel. Had he been less than Lafitte, or the devil, he would not have escaped me—but he did escape me—"

"And—and, with him—" The Frenchman could say no more; his tongue cleaved to the roof of his mouth; but he was understood.

"The lady, whom we, at the post, call the Castilian nun, Dona Constanza! but she had fainted and was unconscious of her situation," replied the dragoon.

His listener groaned, struck his temples fiercely and, deeply agitated, paced the ground under the tree in silence, until the arrival of Montville and a party of the wounded man's troop.

"Describe his craft, if you please!" he asked of the dragoon as he turned to go.

"A schooner with a fore royal—long, black, and very low in the water, with her masts much raking."

Bowing his thanks, he pursued his way along the cliff, with increased rapidity, and recklessly descending to his boat, was in a few moments standing on the deck of his frigate.

His orders were given to get under way, with a startling energy that surprised the crew and infused into them additional activity. In a few seconds, the anchor hung from the bows, the topsails were unloosed and extended to the breeze, and the tall masts covered with folds of canvas. The commander, then, accompanied by Montville, left the ship for the schooner, which also immediately got under way.

The schooner, which now contained the commander of the frigate, immediately after gaining the offing, sailed in the direction of Carthage; while the frigate, hauling her wind, bore up for the island of St. Domingo.

CHAPTER X.

CAPTOR AND CAPTIVE.

THE pirate's schooner, now become the prison of the hapless Constanza, had long passed the capes of the bay, into which it had so gallantly sailed a few hours previous, and the outline of the mountains of Jamaica were rapidly fading in the distance, before the outlaw, assured that there was no danger of being immediately pursued, prepared to leave the deck of his vessel.

"Keep her away, Jean, with everything she can bear, for Barrataria," he said, addressing the helmsman. "Call me if you see anything suspicious."

Before descending the companionway, he cast one piercing glance around the horizon.

"Ha! a sail, and dead ahead!" he exclaimed, as his practiced eye rested upon a scarcely visible speck upon the horizon, in the direction of his vessel's course. "Another—two! Keep her away a point, and let us reconnoiter them," he added, taking his spy-glass and closely surveying the distant objects.

The schooner kept steadily on her way, close-hauled to the wind, while the strangers came down upon them with the wind nearly aft.

As they approached nearer, the foremost showed the square rig of a large vessel, with royals and studdingsails set. In less than an hour from the time they caught the pirate's eye, they were within half a mile to leeward of the schooner—for at such a disadvantage had the pirate cautiously thrown them by altering his course—and the larger distinctly displayed the tall and majestic apparel of a ship-of-war.

"A tiger, sir!" said his young *protege*, Theodore, after gazing at the ship for a moment from the top of a gun-carriage through a focus formed by his fists. "Her teeth glisten like Cudjoe's, here," and he looked toward the ungainly figure of the slave, who, with one long arm clinging to a stay, his head and body bent forward, and his lips drawn back with an ad-

miring grin, was inspecting, with much curiosity, the noble and warlike spectacle the strange sail exhibited.

"Do you know her, senor?" inquired the helmsman, with deference in his manner.

"I think not, Jean," replied Lafitte, musingly—"but she and her little tender seem to walk past us as if disdaining to wet their cutwater with the same salt spray our pretty craft throws about her so merrily. Do you recognize her, Jean?"

"She is, I believe, senor, the French frigate LE SULTAN, that we saw going into Carthage, as we were getting under way off Las Naranjas."

"Indeed!" said the buccaneer, looking for a moment steadily at the passing ship. "I suspect you are right—she was accompanied by a schooner—her yards are not square enough for an American; an Englishman she is not; she is too light rigged, and carries whiter canvas than John Bull. I suspect you are right, Jean."

"I know her, captain, by the length between her mizzen and mainmast, and the rake of her main-royal-mast, as if it had been sprung," said the helmsman.

"You have a seaman's eye, Jean, and you are right too," he quickly added, as the stranger showed two or three lights—"that reads 'France!' But we have no time to dally in returning compliments. Hold to your course again, sir," he said, turning to the helmsman.

The schooner came closer to the wind and resumed the course from which she had diverged to avoid the strange ship, which, lowering her lights, moved past silently and majestically, with her companion, apparently standing into the bay from which the pirate schooner had just taken her departure. With the destination of these two vessels our readers are already acquainted.

"Theodore, how is our fair prisoner?" inquired Lafitte, as he descended into his cabin, accompanied by his young officer.

"She sleeps, sir," he replied, in a low voice.

"Poor girl! I almost wish she may not wake again to know her wretchedness," he said, feelingly. "It is my fate to bring ruin upon all around me. Has she spoken or been conscious of her situation?" he abruptly inquired of the youth.

"I think not, sir," he answered. "By the aid of old Juana, who sympathizes with the misfortunes of the maiden, she soon recovered from her deathlike swoon, but directly passed out of it into a deep sleep. She is very lovely, senor!" he added, with sudden animation.

"Poor lady!" said the outlaw, sadly, "I did not mean to take you from your father's bosom. But he was already dead! And who slew him? My act, if not my hand! But I will seek to atone for the father's wrongs by treating the daughter with honor. Leave me, Theodore, I would be alone," he added aloud.

At the table in the midst of the cabin, and within the dark circle cast beneath by the bottom of the lamp, sat Lafitte.

With his forehead resting upon his hand, he leaned upon the table in an attitude of dejection.

There are times when conscience will wield her scepter over the soul, compelling the guilty to hide their faces in horror! In that short hour, the whole of his life passed before his memory, like some fearful pageant before the vision of the fevered sleeper. He thought of his first crime—against a brother's life, of the blood-stained marble statue, of his love for his cousin, and the sea of passions into which he plunged in consequence of that love, and his subsequent jealousy. He called to mind, while a deep groan escaped him, his last meeting with that brother, the descending knife, and fatal blow—his rapid flight, and artful tale to the captain who saved him that night as his frail boat was sinking in a storm.

"What matters it," he suddenly exclaimed, "that I have gained the wealth of princes—that I have waded through crime and blood to the acquisition of the guilty fame that makes my name terrible—that my hand has been against every man. I am at last but a miserable being—penitent, without the power to repent—remorseful, without hope—a lover of virtue, without daring to seek it—banned of God—outlawed of my race—fratricide and murderer—the mark of Cain branded upon my brow, and burnt deep, deep into my soul. Oh, God!—if there be one—he cried, clasping his hands and lifting his eyes to heaven—"be merciful unto my iniquities, for they are very great!"

And he fervently pressed to his lips the hilt of his rapier, shaped like a cross, dropped his head upon his arm and wept, under the influence of feelings which, at some seasons, will be experienced by the most hardened.

After a few moments' silence he continued:

"Oh, for the days of childhood and innocence! I was then happy! Then we—my brother, my murdered brother and I—kneeling nightly in prayer by our bedside. Then all was innocence and peace. We were taught by our venerable parent to put up our prayers, first to the Virgin, then to our sainted mother. Oh, would to God I had died then! Mother, you would then have embraced your son in heaven."

But, no—no!" he exclaimed aloud, as a ray of hope glanced over his mind; "I am too deeply dyed in crime. With a brother's blood I began—and should a brother's murderer shrink from lesser crimes? Oh, how fatally consistent has been my life with its outset!" and he laughed; but his laugh was hollow and unearthly, while he continued: "Witness! I call upon ye to witness," he cried almost fiercely—"ye exulting demons, who madden me with your presence, if I am not your fit compeer! Ha, ha, ha! I will yet be your leader!" and springing from his seat, he wildly walked the cabin, under the influence of temporary insanity, while such tortures as only a fratricide can feel harrowed his soul.

His forehead, lurid with the glare of the lamp, was contorted and writhing, as if the mind within conflicted with the agonies of the doomed. It was lowered over his eyes, which glowed as Lucifer's might have done when hurled from heaven. His lip curled with an expression of hatred and malignity, and his form expanded as if under the influence of some passion, uncontrollable by human power. Suddenly he stopped, and stood with his arm outstretched in a menacing manner, while his dilated figure exhibited the attitude a painter would have seized to represent Cain standing over the prostrate body of his brother.

An exclamation, in the adjoining state-room, of mingled terror and surprise, recalled him instantly to his accustomed self-possession, for the moment controlled by the passions which, from time to time, aroused by his guilty conscience, enslaved his spirit. The scowling brow resumed its serenity—the wild fire of his eye mellowed into a milder luster—the impassioned and excited form became subdued under a happier influence, and approaching the door of the state-room, with a smile that might have won a maiden's love, mantling his lip, and in a voice modulated to the gentlest tones, he inquired after the welfare of his captive.

We must now return to the period when Constanza was first restored to consciousness. The youthful officer had, with delicate address, after his chief had resigned her to his charge, on gaining his vessel, consigned her to the care of an old negress, wife of the steward of the schooner, who, with that instinctive sympathy characteristic of woman—even of the old and ugly, for the young and lovely of their sex—received her charge with many exclamations of sympathy and regret.

"Sweet lady—oh! Juana hab pity much," she said, receiving her lovely charge, and laying her upon a sofa in the interior state-room of the vessel. "How white an' sof' dis pretty han', wid de gol' ring—but ol' Juana won't steal it off de little slender finger," she added, as an habitual desire to do so was evident, by the sudden motion of her hand and eye. "I wis' de lady would open de eyes," she continued, applying strong stimulants, and resorting to the usual means for restoring suspended animation.

"Hi, Massa Theodore, you rub dat lily han', while I rub dis an' have de temple," she said, with an air of importance, fully conscious of the responsibility with which she was so unexpectedly invested.

The youth, who, by the command of Lafitte, had remained to assist in the recovery of the maiden, knelt by the sofa, and with tenderness took the unconscious hand, brilliant with gems, and with the embarrassed air of one who felt guilty of sacrilege, endeavored to restore warmth and circulation to the lifeless member.

At length the blood flowed through her veins, her bosom heaved like the breast of a wearied dove, and opening her eyes, she gazed vacantly about, but there was no soul in their expression—no intelligence or consciousness of surrounding objects.

"She look, but she no see," said the nurse. "Mariel what big black eyes! dere she clos' um 'gen! but she get life now—no matter—poor lily 'ooman go sleep," and again closing her eyes with a deep sigh, the maiden placed her hand under her head, and on that soft and lovely pillow, rocked by the gentle motion of the vessel, sunk into a refreshing slumber.

"Oh, bil dere massa captain," she said, lifting her finger in the attitude of listening, as she heard Lafitte, after giving his orders to the helmsman, as we have before noticed, descend to the cabin; "ol' Juana hope he no harm de lady—he good man, sometime—and sometime he 'ad! but he hab good heart at de bottom—ol' Juana know he 'do mos' mush good as bad since she sail in de schooner," and the old negress continued habitually waving her plume over the sleeper, and musing upon the character of the buccaneer chief, when a deep groan from the adjoining cabin, where he leaned upon the table, disturbed her reflections.

"Ah, dere Massa Lafitte in one ob his glooms," she said to herself; "de lady no fear not'ing now. T'ank de saint," she continued, as she observed the maiden turn upon her side; "she stir—she wake up; poor t'ing how sorry she be when she hear her fader dead, and know where she be. If ol' Juana be bad 'ooman, she no bad to dis pretty chil', she hab nobody to be kin' to her now but ol' Juana!" and the hideousness of the dark features of the old negress was redeem-

ed, for the moment, by the expression of kindness and pity which passed over them.

The lady slightly moved, murmured indistinctly some name, while a smile came for an instant to her lips; and before its scarce perceptible reflection faded from her cheek, she raised her eyelids, and like one awaking from a pleasant dream, looked peacefully around. Surprised, she surveyed a scene of taste and elegance unfamiliar to her eyes.

The state-room was fitted up in a style of gorgeousness, to which the wealth of many rich argosies had contributed. The maiden herself, reclined on an ottoman of crimson velvet, ornamenting one end of the cabin.

The floor of this luxurious abode was covered with one of those thick Turkish carpets, whose yielding surface betrays no footstep.

The maiden gazed upon the splendor surrounding her, at first with a wondering eye—pressed her fingers upon her eyelids, and looked again, and again.

"I must dream!"—she said, in a low, silvery voice, "Agata! Oh Agata!" and she looked up into the face of her attendant—"what?—no!—I still dream," she cried, placing her hand over her eyes, as if endeavoring to collect her thoughts—"Oh, Maria!—what a dream! what a fearful dream I have had!"—and again she removed her hands, and gazed wildly round the room. She now heard distinctly the sound of rushing waters, and was conscious of motion.

"Father—father! where am I?" she shrieked wildly, "this vessel—the dashing waves! Ha! who is that calls? Oh!—I know it all—all!" she cried, as the voice of Lafitte, addressing her from the inner cabin, fell upon her ear; and the wretched girl buried her face in her hands, and shed burning tears.

"Senora, I would speak with you!"

"Ha! that voice again—miserable Constanza! utterly lost—lost!" she exclaimed.

Suddenly her eye rested upon the gemmed stiletto lying upon the escritoire.

"Holy Virgin, forgive me!—but thus I can save my honor!" and she sprung for the weapon.

"Bon Giu! Help, massa, help, she kill herself!" cried the terrified Juana.

The pirate threw open the door, but, before he could enter, the unsheathed-weapon was grasped in the elevated hand of the maiden, and her eyes were uplifted, full of a sublime and holy devotion.

"Forgive me, blessed Virgin!" she uttered with wild and affecting energy; and the glittering dagger was descending into her bosom, when her captor sprung forward, and the weapon was sheathed in his intervening arm.

"My life, lady, rather than thine!" he said, as he drew it forth.

"Oh, that it had been thy life!" she exclaimed, her beautiful and excited features expressing the intensest mortification at her disappointment; while her dark eye kindled with anger, and her colorless lip showed maidenly apprehension. For a moment she stood in the attitude in which she had been arrested, with these several passions agitating her bosom; but the last overcame all other feelings, and, with clasped fingers, and the uplifted eyes of a Madonna, she said, imploringly and with touching eloquence:

"Oh, senor, I am your captive—but a ransom shall be yours, only let me go in peace and honor. I implore you by your mother! by the blessed Virgin! by your hopes of heaven! by your fear of hell! See! I kneel to you! Oh, senor, I know I am in your hands, but, as you hope for mercy, show mercy now!"

"Rise, lady—I swear!" and Lafitte bared his brow, and kissed the cross-hilted dagger, "I swear by my hope of heaven, my fear of hell, by my sainted mother, and by the Holy Virgin, that you shall remain in all safety and honor!"

The sincere voice in which he repeated her adjuration—the solemn eye, and the devotional manner, reassured the agitated girl.

"Oh, I would believe you, senor; yet," she suddenly exclaimed, "my father! where, oh, where is he?" Although, the moment before, she had shrunk from the touch of her captor, as he extended his hand to raise her from her suppliant posture, while she knelt before him, she now clasped him by the arm, and with a trembling voice, scarcely articulated:

"My—my father!—Oh, tell me where?"

"Be calm, senora. You shall know all, but—"

"You have murdered him!" she shrieked.

"Nay, lady, he has not been murdered—"

"He lives not!" she cried, with terrible energy in her voice, fixing her eyes upon his face, as if she would read in its changing expression what she sought, yet trembled to learn.

"Without violence, he died upon his bed."

"Died!" she shrieked; but the next moment, with altered voice and manner, she murmured:

"Died?—died!—he then is dead!—dead!"

Mournfully she spoke, and her fixed eye betrayed temporary alienation of her reason.

"On his bed—too—and where was Constanza, to close his eyes? Dead! dead! They tell me that my father is dead! and Constanza—living! Oh, that she were dead also!"

How blessed it must be to die! The good old man is happy now; he cannot see his daughter's shame and misery. They tell me he died on his bed! But they tell me false!" she cried, suddenly changing her abstracted manner and low melancholy voice—"Oh, you have murdered him!" she wildly shrieked, pointing at the wounded arm of Lafitte—"there is blood upon your hand—my father's blood. Murderer! murderer! Nay—Lafitte! LAFITTE! I can call you by no other name, that will so express my detestation, and your crime"—and the look which accompanied her words was the more withering, from the extreme beauty of the features upon which it dwelt.

"Senora, I beseech you to be appeased," he said, with a tone indicative of wounded feeling. "Don Velasquez was not slain; he died naturally:—there was no hand laid upon his person. Calm your feelings. You think me guilty—I am, but not so guilty as you believe. If you will hear me a few moments"—he proceeded, as he saw she listened with some attention, and less excitement, to his words, "I will tell you all."

The maiden remained silent—but slightly inclined her head, with the air of one who would listen.

"Heberto Velasquez—" he continued, "you start, but you need fear him no longer!—guided my party to the vault containing your father's treasure, on condition that he should share half the booty—while the whole weight of the act should fall upon me. You were alarmed during the removal of the gold, and your father, seizing a pistol, shot Velasquez, who was below with us, dead."

"Velasquez dead!—and by my father's hand?"

"Even so, senora."

"Then is Heaven just!" she exclaimed.

"The alarm was given," he continued, "and we were surrounded. I entered the room above"—here he bowed low, while a deep flush mantled his cheek, which was slightly reflected from the maiden's, who, with conflicting emotions, listened to the pirate's relation. "There, I first saw you, never, lady, to forget you! I left your presence, and headed my men; but, pressed on every side, I was forced to retreat to the villa. I sprung into the room, and you fainted. The thought flashed upon me, that I could save my life and gain my vessel, by protecting—pardon me, lady—by protecting my body with your sacred person. I caught up your lifeless form, and, holding you before me, retreated, step by step, till I reached my schooner—and to this protection, lady, I owe my life!"—he added, with feeling.

"But, my father?"

"Worn out and feeble, during the tumult around him, he expired."

"Alas! he was ready to die!" she said, calmly. "I have long schooled my heart to part with him—but not thus—oh! not thus!" and, leaning her head upon the table, the lovely orphan gave way to her filial grief.

Lafitte left her to the indulgence of her sorrows, and after delaying in his own cabin, to attend to his slightly wounded arm, ascended to the deck.

CHAPTER XI.

A CHANGE OF DESTINY.

It was noon when the commander of the schooner, who had thrown himself upon the deck to refresh his weary frame, was aroused by a slight touch on his shoulder.

"The lady, sir," said Theodore.

"What of her?" he exclaimed, with a foreboding air, springing to his feet.

"She desires to speak with you, sir."

"Has she slept till now, Theodore?"

"No, sir, she has been all the morning weeping. She is now calmer, and desires an interview."

"Say to her that her slightest wish shall be obeyed. I will attend her," he replied. And turning to ascertain the position of his vessel and the rate she had been running while he slept, he descended into the cabin, and, delaying for a few moments to change his dress, marked with traces of the late battle, for one more befitting the presence of a lady, he tapped lightly at the door of her state-room, and was admitted by Juana into the presence of his captive.

Constanza had recovered her usual self-possession and maidenly dignity, though her cheek was pale, her lip tremulous, and her eyes brilliant through tears. As he entered, his figure displayed to advantage by the rich dress he wore, she rose from the ottoman and motioned him to a seat.

"Senora, I have obeyed your summons," he said, with deep respect.

"Nay, senor, it becomes not the captive to issue commands; it is for her to obey! Senor," she added, with dignity, and yet with timidity, "I have solicited this interview with you from my knowledge of your character—however it may have been clouded and perverted by circumstances, which I am willing to do you the justice to think may have been beyond your control. Now that I have seen you, and know

how nobly you can act if you will be guided by the promptings of your own bosom—I feel that I am not casting too much upon the success of this interview."

"Senora, you have only to speak, to be obeyed," he replied, with respect in his voice and manner. "All that I can do shall be done to atone for your injuries, and mitigate your grief."

"Most sincerely do I thank you, senor—I have not indeed hoped too much!" Here she hesitated to proceed and her manner betrayed embarrassment.

"Speak, lady! what can I do for you?"

"Give me my liberty, senor," she replied, firmly fixing her full dark eyes upon him, while her heart palpitated and her cheek paled as she watched the effect of this demand upon her captor.

He had anticipated her request, and replied, unmoved:

"Where, lady, will you go? Your father—forgive me that I have inadvertently touched so sensitive a chord! But, lady, have you where to go?"

"Oh! no, no! but anywhere but here!" and she buried her face in the folds of the drapery.

"Senora," said he mournfully and in a melancholy voice, "this is the bitterest moment of my life. That I am despised and proscribed of men, I care not! Their taunts I can hurl back; but when so lovely a being turns from me with fear and detestation, it is then I feel the galling of the outlaw's chain. Lady," he continued, suddenly changing his tone to one of deep earnestness, "it is said there is pardon of the Holy Virgin for the greatest crimes; and will not one who must so nearly resemble her in person and spirit also forgive?"

"Oh, senor, speak not blasphemously! You have all the forgiveness I can bestow. Would it could avail you hereafter! But, oh! let me go hence, if then you hope to be forgiven."

"Where will you go, senora? Why will you go?" he said, with impassioned energy. "Here you shall be sacred from intrusion. No footstep shall approach you unbidden. It shall be my whole duty to render you happy—but oh, desert me not! You feel an interest in my welfare—then do not leave me. You are the angel that should guide me back to honor and virtue. Leave me, lady, and with you will depart forever the holier aspirations your presence has awakened. Again the dark spirit of my destiny, whose seat a purer spirit has assumed, will usurp once more his empire! Oh, leave me not to my dark fate—extinguish not forever the only star of hope that has ever beamed upon my ill-fated bark. Lady, behold me at your feet!" and the impassioned outlaw, who had given utterance to his feelings with that intenseness peculiar to his impulsive character, knelt before the maiden.

"Senor Captain, kneel not to me," she said, stepping back with dignity. "Speak not to me thus! I cannot listen to such language. I am your captive—but," she continued more earnestly, "oh, talk not to me thus! I would speak of my deliverance. If one so weak and simple can aught avail your return to society, cheerfully will I do all that a free maiden may do. Senor, my prayers, my influence, if I can command any, shall be yours; but oh, use not to me such language! I would go, senor!" she added, quickly.

"You then despise me," he said, deeply agitated; "you then despise me. Just Heaven, strike home—I am thy victim!"

"Listen to me, lady," he added, after a few moments' silence, in a calmer voice. "In youth I loved a maiden—much like you, but my love met no return; and for that passion I became an exile from my father's halls. Love made me what I am—may it not open for me a brighter future? Speak, lady! and bid me live to virtue—to Heaven and to you!" and he gazed earnestly, his features beaming with the fervor of his passion, up into the face of the troubled girl as he knelt before her. She was deeply affected by his impassioned appeal.

"Rise, senor—I do not despise you—I deeply feel for you—but I cannot, must not listen to your language! Yet, knowing you as I do, you have strong claims to my regard. You have unfolded a character which, while the exhibition of it has surprised me, will ever command my esteem. I must always honor the native nobility and generosity of your character. You have erred, indeed, yet are nobly aspiring to the light from which you have fallen. Oh, sir, forget this hasty passion for a lonely maiden who cannot return it, and be the being, proud in conscious virtue, you seek to be! Let your desire to return to the paths of honor depend upon no contingency in which I am involved. Go forward, senor, independently of extraneous circumstances, and make your own just perception of duty your guide, and you may yet be what you wish to be—what the world would desire to have you—what I sincerely pray you may become! But think—think not of me—my affections," and her brow, cheek and bosom were mantled with rich blood, as she added, "my heart—my love—is—another's!"

The chief still knelt at her feet. The tones of her voice had long ceased, and yet he moved

not. His features became pale, his eye grew darker, his lips were painfully compressed, and his chest heaved with strong emotion. For a moment he continued to kneel in a silence appalling to the heart of Constanza. Then slowly elevating his form, he stood up to the full height of his commanding figure, folded his arms upon his breast, and gazed upon her for an instant with a bitter and sad expression upon his features. When at last, with a great effort, he spoke, there was a calmness in the deep tones of his voice, which fell forebodingly upon her heart.

"Lady, it is well! Ever thus has been my wayward and ill-directed destiny! Forgive me, senora, I will urge my fatal suit no more. I have loved you—how fervently, Heaven and my own heart alone can tell! But it has been a happy dream. No more may I look upon you but as a distant worshiper upon the shrine of his idolatry. A few short hours have changed me, lady. For your sake, I will seek a name of honor among men; and hereafter, when you shall learn that Lafitte, the outlaw, earned laurels and a name, and perchance a death, in honorable war—remember it was your love that guided his bark out of the gulf of crime—your love that wafted it on to honor—and do justice to his memory!"

The rejected suitor then turned away with much emotion in his manner, and hastily quitted the state-room.

"Sail ho!" rung in his ears, as he ascended to the deck.

"What do you make her out?" he shouted to the man aloft, in a tone that startled even his men, with whom his trumpet-like voice was familiar.

"A brig, sir—standing to the southeast, with her courses hauled up, and under topgallant-sails."

"Can you see her hull?"

"Not yet, sir; but she rises rapidly."

"Lay down out of that, sir," said Lafitte, impatiently; and immediately he sprung forward with his glass, ascended the foremast, and closely surveyed the stranger. In a few minutes he descended, and ordered the helmsman to steer so as to gain the wind of her.

"What do you make her out, sir?" inquired his second in command, Ricardo, a swarthy Spaniard, with an unpleasing eye, but otherwise a good-humored countenance, half-shaded by a forest of black whiskers, who was smoking a cigar, as he paced the leeward side of the deck.

"A merchantman, probably, bound into Kingston."

"Ho, there—men!" shouted the lieutenant; "to your guns, and see that they are all prepared; and be ready, boarders."

"Ay, ay," they cheerfully responded; and there was at once a bustle of warlike preparation on board. The crew, which numbered the day previous about sixty, and now cut down to forty, by the severe losses of the preceding night, engaged with alacrity in preparing for the expected fight.

"This preparation is useless, Ricardo," said Lafitte; "she will not resist us. If she is bound for Kingston, I shall not injure her—and the lady below must be sent back in her."

"Cielos! without ransom, senor?"

"No—I give my share of last night's booty as her ransom. Does that serve your purpose?"

"Senor Captain, it does. I would give more for the glitter of a good Mexican dollar, than the sweetest smile that ever dwelt on pretty maiden's lip. Miraculo! Captain, you soon weary of this lady's favors."

"Silence, sir—the lady goes to Jamaica, in yonder vessel, if bound there," replied Lafitte, sternly; and, descending into the cabin, he once more sought the presence of his captive.

"Lady," he said, without entering her state-room, "there is a vessel now approaching, and if, as I think, it is bound for the island, you are free to depart on her. Where would you prefer landing?"

"At Kingston, senor—I have an uncle there. I would land at Kingston! Oh, sir," she continued earnestly, and advancing toward him, "jest not with my hopes—am I indeed at liberty?"

"Lady, the uncaged bird is not freer than you shall be within the hour."

"May God bless you, generous sir!"

"Nay, I dare not keep you here," he replied; "I have not confidence in my own strength of purpose. Remaining, I fear for you—absent, you are only safe; while I, who would wish to forget, must live only in dwelling on your image. Adieu! I will again wait on you when I ascertain the character and destination of the vessel."

When he returned to the deck, she was plainly visible about a league to leeward, under press of sail, and endeavoring to escape. She had hauled from her course several points since she first hove in sight, and now stood south before the wind, about a league distant.

"Shall we give chase, sir?" inquired the lieutenant.

"Ay, we must come up with her! put her away."

The schooner, falling off a little with a freer

wind, darted rapidly after the stranger, who was using every exertion to escape. But the buccaneer rapidly gained on her, and in about half an hour she was within the range and command of her guns.

Ten carronades frowned along the pirate's deck, and a gang of fierce and reckless men, some stripped to their waists, and armed with pistols, knives and cutlasses, stood around each gun.

"Clear away that starboard gun amidships," shouted the lieutenant.

"All clear, sir."

"Pitch a shot, then, across her fore-foot."

The seaman stooped to the gun, and with his eye on a level with the piece, gave it the proper direction.

"All ready, sir."

"Fire!"

The little vessel trembled and recoiled at the discharge; and the loud report of the gun had scarcely ceased ringing in the ears of the crew, when the brig threw her maintopsail to the mast, hoisted American colors, and waited the pleasure of the buccaneer.

"Lower and man the boat, Theodore—go on board and ascertain what she is, and where bound," said the pirate, as the schooner approached nearly within hail of the stranger. The Gertrude lay to until the return of the boat—Lafitte the while leaning over the quarter, gazing in silence upon the vessel.

"Well, Theodore?" he inquired, as his messenger returned.

"She is an American brig from New Orleans, bound to Porto Rico, but will touch at Kingston if there be gold to be made by it."

"Ay, gold—gold! well, they shall have it."

In a few minutes Constanza had changed the gorgeous cabin of the pirate for the homelier accommodations of the peaceful and plain merchantman.

"Lady, adieu," he said, taking his leave on the deck of the brig; "you may soon forget me, but while my heart throbs with life, I never can forget Constanza Velasquez. That name shall be the talisman of a more honorable destiny—for I cannot be linked with guilt, bearing your image in my heart. Farewell, lady," he added, hastily. "Theodore will accompany you to your friends, and you will also have Juana as your attendant."

"God bless you, senor! I deeply feel my debt of gratitude to you! I shall only remember you with friendship. May God and your country receive henceforth the duties you owe to each. Farewell, and the blessed Maria be your protector!" and she extended her hand to the chief, who, tenderly and ardently pressing it to his lips, sprung over the side of the brig into his boat.

He waved his hand to her distant figure, as he stood once more on the deck of his schooner, which immediately resumed her former course: while the merchant vessel, again making sail, stood steadily toward the port of her destination.

CHAPTER XII.

THE STORM AND ITS EFFECTS.

THE sun went down that evening with an angry aspect, lurid clouds were piled around him, and the western skies wore the brassy hue, which, in those seas, is the precursor of a storm. The commander of the brigantine, which had now become the temporary abode of Constanza, was standing upon the quarter-deck, watching the threatening appearance of the heavens with an anxious eye.

"Make all snug," he said, turning to his second in command, after a long survey of the brewing tempest; "we are likely to have a hard night of it—you had better send down the royal and topgallantsails, and single reef the topsails."

The night was fast setting in, although the red twilight still lingered in the east, and along the western horizon, both sky and sea were enveloped in gloom. Suddenly the breeze which had wafted them along died away—and a fearful stillness dwelt in the air, while respiration became painful. The sailors stood at the several posts, where the coming danger might most require their presence—conversing in low tones with each other—anxiously watching the gathering storm, which momentarily threatened to burst upon their helpless bark—or, with an inquiring gaze, observing the face of their captain.

Suddenly a flash of lightning darted along the cloud, like a glittering serpent—and simultaneously the air was rent with a report so loud, that the startled seamen placed their hands suddenly and intensely to their temples.

"What, my lovely passenger!" said the captain, with gallantry, as the slight form of Constanza met his eye. "The thunder has alarmed you! shall I attend you to your state-room?"

"No, oh no, senor, the cabin is too close. It is but thunder, then! I thought it the firing of cannon! Then we are not pursued! Bless thee, Santa Maria," she continued, mentally. "I feared that dangerous man had changed his mind—I did him injustice. But oh, that I were safe beneath my uncle's roof! Is it far to Kingston, senor?" she inquired.

"Twelve leagues, lady. If we safely weather this gale, we shall be there by morning."

"Thank you, sir, for such cheering words; but is there, as your words imply, danger? See—that light upon the sea! What is it?" she eagerly inquired, pointing to the west.

"Now we have it; stand ready, all!" he shouted, as a line of foam, stretching along the horizon, caught his eye as he looked up at her exclamation.

The vessel lay broadside to the path of the tempest, and so great was the calm that the helmsman had no control over her. The captain gave his several orders with professional rapidity and energy.

"Hard-a-weather—hard up, hard up, for your life!" and he sprung to the helm; but the head of the brig remained immovable in the same direction.

"Good God! Head her off, or we shall be capsized! Lady, below—below! Youngster!" he cried to Theodore, "see to her."

Every precaution was taken for the safety of the brig that experienced seamanship could suggest; the old man stood grasping the helm with a firm hand, while, with a calm and unblenching eye, he watched the advancing hurricane. Onward it came, plowing up the sea, which boiled, roaring and foaming before it—a moving wall of surge.

Constanza, with one hand grasping the companionway, within which she stood, and the other resting upon the arm of her young attendant, gazed fearfully upon the visible presence of the tempest. Her bosom heaved irregularly, her cheek was pale, and her lips compressed with expectation; but there was a sublimity in the scene which she loved, and which chained her to the spot.

"Now, look to yourselves!" shouted the captain; and the wild waters leaped over the brig with the noise and body of a cataract; the winds twisted the light masts like withes; and the brig was borne bodily down by the irresistible force of the tempest, and lay prostrate upon her beam-ends.

The weather main-chains were wrenched like threads, with all their rigging, from the sides of the vessel; and the mainmast, bending like whalebone broke off with a loud crack close to the deck. A wild cry mingled with the roar of the tempest, "the live thunder leaped," and the lightnings glared about the vessel, as if in mockery of human suffering.

"Cut away the foremast—lively, men, lively!" cried the captain, clinging to the quarter-rail, half-submerged in the sea.

The mate, who was prepared for this emergency, ran along the elevated side of the ship, and with an ax severed the distended shrouds, which flew wildly into the air, lashing the sea as they fell. The remaining stays parted with sharp reports before the ax descended, and the unsustained mast, after a few vigorous blows by the same daring hand, snapped off a few feet from the deck; and a large wave, lifting it like a straw, bore it with all its rigging far away to leeward. Immediately the relieved vessel righted, and floated amid the ocean, an unmanageable wreck.

The moment the hurricane struck the side of the brig, Theodore, holding firmly the arm of Constanza, hastily drew the slide of the companionway, the doors of which were closed, over the place where she stood, and the waters swept harmlessly past her. But the violence of the shock would have thrown her down, had not the young buccaneer with great presence of mind, rapidly adapted their position to the sudden inclination of the vessel. Alarmed she stood with her crucifix clasped to her lips till the vessel righted, when at her repeated request, Theodore removed the slide to allow her to look forth upon the tempest.

What a sublime scene met her gaze! The heavens were pitchy black, over which the lightnings played in streams of fire—the thunder rolled in one prolonged and incessant reverberation—the sea was illuminated with phosphorescent light, and raging with a loud roar; while vast masses of water, rising from its bosom on every side, would swell into gigantic billows, and burst into a head of glittering foam.

The vessel, with her upper deck flooded, plunged heavily into the chasms yawning on every side, and threatening to entomb her. The whole scene that met her eye was one of wild and fearful desolation. The old man, with his saturated gray locks streaming in the gale, stood at the helm, which he had seized when the brig righted—for the helmsman had been borne off into the sea, and his far-off wail for help had long before died in the more melancholy howlings of the storm.

"This is indeed fearful!" she exclaimed. "Poor old man—he has lost perhaps his all—but his life is safe. Safe?" she repeated, despairingly; "oh, who can say that one life is safe in this appalling scene!"

"Nay, lady, the bite of the storm is over—we only hear his growl," said Theodore; "at any rate, it can harm this old hulk no more. We are not far from land; if it were but day, we could see it. Cheer up, lady—there is no more fear."

"I fear not, senor, for myself," she replied,

calmly; "but that venerable man! he is perhaps a parent—it is for him, and for you, I feel. You have perhaps, a mother and a fair sister, whose lives are wrapped up in you!"

"No, lady," he replied, sadly; "I am a parentless boy. There is none to call me brother. I can remember once loving both a mother and sister, but they now sleep in the sea. Captain Lafitte found me a lonely and dying boy on such a wreck as this—he is all I have to care for me."

"And does he care for you?"

"Lady, he does. His is a stern nature, and wild deeds are familiar to him. Yet he has deep affections. Lady, he cares much for me! He imagines I resemble one—his brother, I believe, though he seldom speaks of it—who met with some mischance in boyhood. For that resemblance also am I dear to him."

"Do you love him, boy?"

"Do you love your father, lady?"

"Oh, speak not of my father—alas, he too is dead!"

"Pardon me, senora—but so I love my benefactor."

The lightning now became less frequent and intense—the thunder rumbled only along the distant horizon—the clouds broke into masses, the thin edges of which grew lighter, while a spot of sky, in which sparkled a single star, could be seen at intervals through the drift. The waves grew less and less in size.

All at once, beneath an opening in a cloud, the sea shone with a silvery light, and Constanza, who had watched the various phases of the storm and the rapid changes of the scene, with a pleased and wondering eye, had scarcely exclaimed:

"Look, senor—how beautiful! what can pour that light down upon the sea?" when the breaking clouds, sailing before the receding gale, displayed the moon shining in unclouded brilliancy upon the sea—glancing her welcome beams over the waves in a path of tremulous light, and falling like a smile from heaven upon the wreck.

"Ha! what! a sail! God be thanked!" exclaimed the captain, as, after lashing the helm, he made one of the group at the companionway.

"Look, young sir, with your keener eye—just in the moon's wake—no—it is the cap of a wave!"

"It is a sail, sir!" exclaimed the youth joyfully. "I saw distinctly the outline of a main-sail and then it disappeared as if by the rolling of the vessel. There! the sails look black, relieved against the moon."

"I see it, boy—you are right," answered the captain in a lively tone; "she is within half a mile of us."

"The blessed Maria forbid that she should pass us by!" ejaculated Constanza.

"We will prevent that," said the old commander, cheerfully; and descending into the cabin, he returned with a large blunderbuss.

"This will make more noise than a trumpet," he said, cocking it; "but we will first wait and see if she does not come toward us."

"I saw her distinctly, sir," said Theodore, while you were below, and she appears to be a large schooner lying to."

"We will hail her then," said the captain; and holding the blunderbuss high above his head, he pointed it in the direction of the vessel and fired. The report of the piece, to their ears, yet familiar with the roar of the tempest, sounded faintly.

"I fear they will not hear it," he said, "it hardly seemed to go twice the length of the brig toward her."

There was a moment of anxious suspense, when a light flashed upon their eyes from the stranger, and the heavy report of a large gun came booming across the water.

"Thank God! we are safe!" exclaimed the captain. "She must be an armed vessel, from the free way she burns powder."

"She is making sail, sir," said Theodore, after gazing a minute intently at the vessel; "she is a schooner; her masts and mainsail are now plainly visible; she has a main-topmast staysail set, and carries topsails, with jib and flying jib. She is now standing—no! do I see rightly? She is standing from us, sir!"

"She is, indeed," hastily exclaimed the captain, in a disappointed tone. "She must have mistaken our situation. We are so low in the water, she could not see us till close aboard of us. Show a light upon the stump of the mainmast!" he shouted.

Before the seaman he addressed reached the fore-castle, Theodore had sprung below, and returned to the deck with the lamp which hung in the cabin, and raising it on the end of a blunderbuss, he held it above his head.

In silence, and with heart-rending anxiety, they watched the success of their beacon, and, in a few minutes, an answering light from the stranger filled their bosoms with delight. The vessel now tacked, and stood toward them, often appearing and disappearing from their eyes, as the dimasted brig rose upon some larger billow, or descended into some profounder cavern of the waves.

The deliverer came toward them, with tall

and stately motion—his sails rounded with the breeze, and his prow flinging high the spray, as she bounded forward.

"I should know that vessel!" said Theodore, quickly as she came nearer. "Yes! it is, sir!" he said, turning to the captain, "that is a buccaneer!"

"Lady, dear lady!" he said, as a slight exclamation escaped Constanza, "be not alarmed! I am surety for your safety. That is one of our squadron, it is true; but I am known to the commander, and he shall convey you in safety to Jamaica."

The maiden spoke not, but with clasped hands and tearful eyes silently looked up to heaven, as if she looked for the protection there, which seemed denied her on earth.

"Wreck ahoy!" shouted a harsh voice from the schooner, which was now under the stern of the brig, showing four ports to a side, and from the numerous dark heads peering over the hammock-nettings, apparently full of men.

"Captain, your trumpet! allow me to reply. Your safety depends upon it!" said the youth, taking the instrument from his passive hands.

"Ho! the Julie!"

"Who the devil are you?" replied the first hailer.

"A prize of Lafitte's bound into the rendezvous, and dismasted in the squall."

"Is that Theodore?"

"Even as you are Sebastiano! Send a boat for the prisoners, and afterward take out the cargo. It is valuable."

"Be not so ready, my good youth, to bestow what belongs not to you," said the old man, interposing.

"There is no alternative, sir; he must have all. And what avails it to you now, whether it go to the use of good Sebastiano there, who is making such commendable haste with his boat—or, as must inevitably have been the case, to the bottom of the sea! You must ask of Sebastiano no more than life. He will argue the point with you, and demonstrate to his, if not to your satisfaction, that he pays well for the cargo, by saving you from the dolphins."

The boat, riding over the huge seas, now balancing upon their summits, now disappearing in their hollows, at length reached the wreck, and a heavily-built man, who had passed into his third score of allotted years, stepped from it onto the deck of the brig.

"Oh, Theodore—Senor Theodore!" scarcely articulated the trembling maiden, clinging with nervous apprehension to his arm.

"Do not be alarmed, senora," he replied, encouragingly, "I can manage this lump of bone and muscle as I would a chained bear."

"Ha! my good Sebastiano!" he added, addressing him with much freedom, "I greet your jocund phiz with more of welcome than I ever dreamed I should do."

"By the twelve apostles! always including the worthy Judas," growled the buccaneer, in reply, casting his eyes over the wreck, "but you have made clean work of this. Sathan, himself, seemed to lend his bellows, and a spare hand, to help blow out the gale to-night. The Julie once carried a holy father, and the devil couldn't hurt her, so we were safe. Santa Madre!—if it had been in broad noon, it would have blown out the sun's eye—Cielos!—but who have we here?" he continued, raising his voice, on discovering the figure of the maiden, half concealed behind the intervening person of the young buccaneer.

Instinctively, the terrified Constanza withdrew herself from the rude gaze of the rover, and closely veiled her face.

"It is a lady," said Theodore, in his ear, "who goes on large ransom to Kingston. She must be treated," he added, firmly, "with respect. Such is the express command of Lafitte."

"Senor Lafitte's commands are gospel to me," replied the other, with deference in his gruff tones. "Senora, yo espero que su alteza vea en perfecta salud," he said, addressing the assured Constanza, and bowing with blunt respect in his manner.

"This vessel being in a sinking condition, senora," he continued, "it has become necessary to remove you. In all things, Captain Lafitte should be obeyed; but circumstances, as I can readily prove to you, often render obedience impossible, as for instance—"

"Come, Sebastiano, the lady will hear your conclusion on board the Julie. Is your boat ready?"

"All ready, Senor Theodore."

"Ho!" he cried, "make room for the captain's lady to pass. He is to take to himself a wife, according to the command. Now it is good to marry, hombres, first, because if this generation should not be given in marriage, the next—"

"Good Senor Captain Sebastiano!" exclaimed Theodore, with some impatience.

"Well, well, Senor Theodore, the boat is ready—in proof of which—"

"Hold hard, there, men!" cried Theodore—"jump in, sir," he said to the captain of the brig, who reluctantly obeyed.

"Now allow me to fold this cloak about your form, senora; hold firm to my arm! Juana,

step in, or you will be overboard! Now wait till the boat rises again— There! step firmly!" "Done like a seaman, senora!" said Sebastiano, as he aided Theodore in handing her into the boat.

"Shove off! now give way!" he said aloud, with a professional brevity unnatural to him; and in a few minutes the party were safely landed on the deck of the schooner.

Constanza, assured from the respect shown her by the buccaneer, and the manifest influence of Theodore over him and his crew that she had nothing at present to apprehend, retired to a little state-room whither he conducted her and, wearied by the trying scenes through which she had passed, threw herself into one of the berths of the rude but comfortable cabin and was soon buried in profound and peaceful sleep.

Theodore now took the pirate aside, and explained to him those facts which he did not choose to disclose before the crew, ever ready to mutiny on the slightest occasion.

After the most valuable freight had been removed to the schooner from the brig, which, with a plunge, disappeared beneath the surface of the ocean, the seamen, placed under the hatches with some attention to their comfort as released prisoners of a former capture, and sail once more made on the schooner—"Now, good Sebastiano," said Theodore, "we must put into Kingston to-morrow. This lady must be landed according to the terms of the ransom."

"Now, look you, my very worthy youth, whom, next to Captain Lafitte, I hold in all respect—and for three reasons—"

"I will hear your reasons another time, Sebastiano," replied the youth quickly; "you must to Kingston to-morrow."

Here a discussion of some length took place, in which Sebastiano convinced his young friend that on account of certain recent notorious captures in that vicinity he would risk both his own and the necks of his men and his vessel if he approached that port, as several armed cutters were already out in search of him.

Such was the cogency of his arguments that Theodore acquiesced, and immediately explained to the ill-fated maiden the necessity of adopting another course than that originally intended to pursue. The schooner, therefore, under the orders of Captain Sebastiano, steered for the rendezvous of Lafitte's squadron, before alluded to, situated at the head of the Bay of Gonzaves, in the island of St. Domingo.

CHAPTER XIII.

A CHASE AND AN ENCOUNTER.

THE French goelette, or tender, which bore the fanciful name of *Eulione*, now having on board the commander of the French frigate "*Le Sultan*," after separating from the larger vessel, on gaining the offing, sailed, as we have before mentioned, in the direction of Carthagea—while the latter steered for St. Domingo.

The object of Count D'Oyley, in taking an opposite course to that pursued by the frigate, was to make sure the chance of intercepting or overtaking the pirate whom he sought, who he supposed had sailed for one of his two rendezvous in the West India seas—an uninhabited island near Carthagea, or a secluded bay on the west coast of St. Domingo.

With the speed of the wind, the little vessel flew over the water, promising, by her unequalled velocity, soon to gain the advantage which the buccaneer had obtained by many hours' precedence.

Leaving the impatient lover in his pursuit of retributive justice, we will precede him to the shores of the Spanish main, toward which his vessel was rapidly borne.

Noon reigned over the Southern Caribbean sea, where our scene now opens. The outline of the hills of St. Martha was veiled in a gauze-like haze, and the tropical sun was reflected with dazzling brilliancy from the water.

There was not breath enough to toss a curl on a maiden's brow. The surface of the ocean was undimpled, and sleepily rolled its polished waves toward a coral reef, dotted here and there with clumps of low mangroves, upon which they broke with a sudden roar—sometimes leaping quite over them, and mingling with the calm waters of the lagoons, which stretched between them and the beach of the mainland.

Beyond this reef, and nearly opposite the St. Domingo gate, rising and falling upon the swells with a swan-like motion, a xebec, or three-masted schooner, rode at anchor. Every spar and line of her rigging was painted upon the water with the accuracy of reality. Each mast consisted of a single black stick, crossed obliquely by a long, pliant yard, upon which was trailed closely up a lateen sail, suspended about half the altitude of the mast from the deck. The hull, which was about ninety feet long, was constructed with great breadth of beam, and flush from stem to stern. Like her spars, she was painted black, with the exception of a narrow riband of red paint drawn around just below her gunwale. From her unusual breadth amidships the eye would be deceived in estimating her tonnage too large, but the extreme sharpness of her bows more than

qualified this unusual width, and while it contradicted her apparent burden, promised unusual speed.

Two large boats were lashed in the center, and a smaller one hung on each quarter. Directly amidships, and just before the mainmast, on a revolving carriage, was mounted a long gun; and in its sockets, sunk in the frame-work around it, were several thirty-eight-pound shot—a size proportionate to the vast caliber of the piece. Besides this frowning emblem of war, on either side of the vessel and half run out of the ports, which were thrown open for free circulation of the air, were three cannon of different caliber and metal—two of them being cast out of brass, and originally intended for heavy field artillery; the others of iron, carrying eighteen and twenty-four-pound shot. The arms of Spain were stamped upon one; the crown of Great Britain and the eagle of the United States, upon the remainder.

Under a canvas awning spread from side to side of the vessel, were congregated about a score of men, in whose harsh and varied countenances a physiognomist might recognize individuals of many nations; although the dark hair, gleaming eye, and full red lip of the Spaniard, the swarthy cheek and sharp features of the Portuguese, showed what countries were most numerous represented.

Under another awning, spread over the larboard gangway, and shading the space occupied by two of the guns, were assembled a larger group, whose dress and mode of passing the sultry hours of midday were similar.

On the opposite side of the deck, in the sun, lay a negro upon his back with a grotesque expression upon his ungainly features, playing with a monkey, which he held struggling in the air. The animal had been curtailed of his natural and most ornamental appendage, while, undoubtedly for the preservation of symmetry, his ears had been shorn after the same fashion.

Half a dozen boys, white, black, and yellow, whose heads displayed all the varieties of carot, woolly, and straight black hair, were gathered about him, their eyes sparkling with glee.

One of these youths, whose robes would have required much enlargement to rival the primitive fig leaf, was occupied in pricking, by way of practice in his profession, the hams of the suspended monkey, and delighting himself and his particolored companions in the contortions and yells of the animal.

Further aft was spread an awning, whose scalloped edges bound with some bright-red material, indicated due consciousness of that superiority which appertains either to the quarter-deck of a ship of the line or a pirate schooner. Beneath it reclined various individuals, whose rank on board the schooner entitled them to protection from the sun further astern than the other less-favored occupants of the vessel.

From the shrouds which on either side supported the after or mizzen-mast was stretched a hammock of net-work, in which lay a heavily-framed man, whose breadth of shoulders indicated great physical power, while the rotundity of his short person betrayed the bon vivant. His head was large and covered with red, bushy hair; his complexion, naturally fair, was now changed to a jocund red. His eyes were small, deep set and gray, his forehead fleshy, and his cheeks full and hanging, while the lower portion of his face drooped into that second and pleasing fullness, which bears the appellation of "double-chin." A pair of white jean trousers enveloped his lower limbs, while a loose gingham coat was wrapped partially round his body. His height, or rather length, as he lay in the open hammock, appeared less than five feet and judging from the lines of years which graced his visage and an occasional tuft of gray hair interspersed in the burning bush covering his phrenological organs, his age might have been a little above forty-five or six years.

A half-naked African stood at his head, waving over him a large fan, made of the gorgeous feathers of some Mexican bird.

On the deck nearly under the hammock reposed two other figures, whose dress and arms, which they constantly wore, in connection with their presence on the quarter-deck, indicated them to be officers. A fourth figure, with dark and handsome features, rendered unpleasing by an habitual sinister expression, with a slender and athletic form, reminding one of the athlete of ancient Greece—arrayed in flowing white trousers and loose gingham frock, confined to his waist by a yellow silk sash—which also secured pistols and cutlass—leaned in an easy attitude against the binnacle. His muscular arms were bared to the shoulder and folded over his breast, while the smoke of a cigar curled unheeded over his head. His eyes were roving along the northern horizon, visible between the awning and the quarter-rail, but were without that consciousness which indicated attention to any particular object. All at once they lighted up and his brow was lowered over them, as if to shade and strengthen his vision, and with his head and body advanced, he looked long and steadily toward one point of the horizon.

"Vat dat you shee, maat?" slowly interro-

gated the corpulent personage in the hammock, as his eye by chance detected the change in the attitude and manner of his officer. "No shail, Martinez—heh?"

"A sail I believe it is, captain. My glass here, you black imps—jump!" he cried; and the troop of urchins, leaving the monkey in the midst of his martyrdom, sprung for the companionway.

"A schooner, with a gaff topsail, and topgallant-mast—I can just see the peak of her mainsail!" he said, after looking a moment through the instrument.

"Heh! dat shall pe Mynbeer Captain Lafitte—to pe shure!—shee if dere pe royals!"

"She has none set—I can't well make out her spars at this distance, but she brings a breeze with her, whoever she bel—her upper sails belly out like—" and he looked round at the corporeal curvature of his captain for an illustration, with a sly smile of Castilian humor.

"None of dat, Mynbeer Martinez, you are put a strait spar—vereeas I sh am always under full topshails—to pe shure."

"I make her out now, distinctly," said the first officer; "she is a schooner of about seventy tons, with fcretopsail, and topgallantsail set. Caramba! she is walking down this way with a bone in her teeth."

"Hol there forward—stand by to get under way, the breeze we have so long been praying for is coming upon us now, with a light heel. Moreover, we are likely to have a breeze of long shot, by the saucy looks of this stranger," he added, as before one of the sudden and strong winds, peculiar to that climate after a lengthened calm, the vessel rapidly approached, showing a tier of ports on her starboard side, which was presented to them, out of which the heads of five or six guns bristled, with a very warlike air.

"Hah! vat ish dat you shays?" and the portly commander of the schooner, standing upon his legs, after many ponderous sighs and irrelevant ejaculations took the glass from his mate, and looked steadily at the advancing vessel.

"Mine Got, it ish true—he will be carry ten kuns in hish teck—to pe shure, and full of mansh,"—he said, with energy, as the schooner, now within two miles of them, hauled her wind and stood toward Carthagea, seen indistinctly in the distance through the heated atmosphere, which danced with a tremulous wavy motion over every object. With its silvery beach, its battlements groaning with cannon, its heavy towers, convents, and monasteries, and strongly fortified surrounding eminences, their sides dotted with picturesque villas, the city with its suburbs, slept beneath the glowing noon, in silence like that of midnight.

The breeze now ruffled the surface of the water around their vessel, breaking it into myriads of little waves, which emulously leaped into the air, as if to welcome its approach.

"Man the capstan! heave up the anchor!" shouted the mate, sternly.

Every sleeper sprung to his feet, and every idler and jester became at once active and serious.

The capstan flew merrily round, and at the brails and balyards of the lateen sails stood various parties of the crew ready to obey the orders of their officer.

"Show the trading lugger," he added; and the guns were hastily drawn in, and the ports closed, so as to present a plain broadside to the stranger.

The anchor soon hung from the bows, and the triangular sails of each mast were spread to the breeze; the jib, which extended along the bowsprit, was hoisted, and the vessel bending low before the wind, moved along with increasing velocity.

"Shall we try him, captain?" said the mate, coolly, retiring to the quarter-deck after getting sail on the schooner.

"Dry vivty tyfils! Not'ing else s'all be got peside, from dish chap, put iron piscuit in'te bread-pasket—to pe shure."

"Then, now we are under way, shall we steer for Gonzaves?" he inquired.

"Yes, Mynbeer Martinez—de hatches are as full as an Englishman—"

"Or a Dutchman, captain?" interrupted Martinez, with a wink to his junior in command.

"Letsh me shpeak, Martinez," grumbled the captain, good-humoredly, "or a Dutchman after Christmash tinner—dere is no more room for de more cargoesb—if we take more prishes. Put de helm up for Gonzaves!"

Obedient to the braces, the sails swung round until they lay nearly parallel with the length of the vessel, and close-hauled on the wind, lying down to leeward, so that her gunwales dipped deep in the water, she left the shores of Carthagea behind her, and stood for St. Domingo.

She had sailed on this course but a short time when the stranger, who was standing in the opposite direction, also changed her course, hauling close on the wind, and running so as to intercept the buccaneer.

"Martinez, dish looksh shqually—one, two, dree, vive guns on hish sides," said the captain, as he observed this maneuver; "he ish a cruiser—ve musht fight or show him our beelsh; and

vy s'all we fight, ven dere ish no purpose—we can take no more coods—put he vill, maype, take ush—to pe shure! It petter not pe fightings—heh! Martinez?"

"As you say, sir—I suspect he is in chase of our vessel—we can hardly cope with him."

"Set the gaff topsails and hoist away the spencer," he shouted;—and this last sail, with three small triangular sails stretched from the topmasts, which were of one piece with the lower masts, were now spread to the wind, and gave additional speed to the vessel. Straining through every joint, she parted the green waves before her, flinging the foam in showers around her bows, and promising to distance the other vessel, which, having the wind on the pirate, now rapidly neared him.

It now became the object of the pirate to escape from the armed vessel, which was evidently trying to cut him off, and to this end all his energies were now directed.

As he was giving various orders to increase the speed of his vessel by securing the guns, or changing their position, and tightening the braces, the stranger suddenly ran up the French flag, and a puff of smoke from the side of his vessel was immediately followed by the report of a cannon, and the skipping of a shot across their wake, within a few fathoms of the stern.

"Heh! vivty tyfils! he sbeaks mit de iron trumpet—Martinez," continued the captain, with an energy unlooked-for in a man of his corporature—"ve musht lame him—ordisnicht de tolpins vill eat a goot supper, from the potty of Mynheer Jacob Getz-utanner—to pe shure!"

"Clear the starboard guns and double-shot them—stand ready to give him a broadside! Here, Jacobo, Andrea, Manuel! where are your ears? Level that long gun, and let him have it from stem to stern as we cross his bows—make a clean sweep through him! Now stand ready all!"—shouted the young Spaniard, to whom his captain seemed to have resigned the more active duties of command; and springing upon the hammock-nettings, he watched with a deliberate eye the motions of the approaching vessel.

The pirate was standing nearly due north, close-hauled upon the wind, which was from the northwest, and running at the rate of about eight knots an hour, while the French schooner was standing nearly in a southwestern course, also close-hauled with everything drawing, endeavoring to keep to the windward of the pirate, who was using every effort to prevent the success of this nautical maneuver. They were within less than half a mile of each other, when the mate sprung upon the quarter-rail to watch the favorable moment to disable his opponent. The faces of the men and officers in uniform upon the decks of the strange schooner were easily discernible by him, and he observed that on board of her every preparation was made for action.

"Can we cross her fore-foot, sir?" said he, turning to his captain, who stood by with a face expressive of some anxiety but more resolution.

"No—no, Martinez—'tish an impossible! If ve letsh him go across our cutvater, he vill sink ush—to be shure—"

"Shall we give it to him?" inquired the Spaniard; "it is our only chance!"

"Ayl! hoisht away de let and crosb, and t'under mit de kuns."

At his command a black flag, upon which was painted a red cross, surmounted by a skull, fluttered at the mast-head.

"Now, fling open the ports—well aim each gun—let go sheets and braces all!" he shouted, as the Frenchman began to show his weather ports. "Now she rights; give it to him—fire!"

One after another, in rapid succession, the guns of the starboard broadside were fired at the schooner, and the pirate had the satisfaction of witnessing her foretopmast fall over the side, cut in two by a shot. The wounded vessel yawed and fell off from the wind, while the pirate crew shouted like demons at their success.

"Well done, my men! Braces all! hard-weather!" cried the mate, cheerfully.

Once more under steerageway, the buccaneer's schooner shot ahead and to windward of the chase, who, wearing round, gave her a broadside, which tore up the deck of her fore-castle, killing two men, breaking an arm of one of the young apprentices, before introduced to the reader, and slightly injuring the bowsprit.

The pirate now moved over the water with rapidity, leaving his wounded pursuer far astern, though still slowly in chase. With his spy-glass he could detect the men aloft repairing the rigging and setting the topmast, while every spar and yard of canvas that could be made available was brought into use.

Night found the vessels more than a league apart—their repairs completed—steering the same course, and still the pursuing and pursued. After the sun went down the wind gradually increased, and at midnight a storm lashed the waters into foam. The vessels were separated in the darkness, and their crews were engaged

until daybreak in a battle with the elements instead of each other. As the morning broke the gale abated, and by the increased light the pirate saw his opponent lying to, within a third of a mile of him, to windward.

"All hands to make sail!" he shouted.

But the stranger had already discovered him, and was spreading his canvas and bearing down upon him.

"Now we must fight, captain!" said Martinez to his superior officer, who had just come upon deck—"we have no chance of using our guns in this sea. Dios y St. Iago!" he hastily exclaimed, "they are preparing to board us. Ho, there! boarders, all!—repel boarders!" he shouted.

Cutlasses and boarding-pikes were rapidly passed from hand to hand along the decks. The men stripped to their trowsers, placed their pistols in their belts, and in three divisions, headed by the captain, Martinez, and an inferior officer, stood at the bows, stern and amidships, and sullenly and resolutely awaited their foe. The sea was rolling in large waves, over which the armed stranger rode lightly, as he advanced to engage with the pirate. The two vessels were now within hail of each other.

"Ho, the schooner ahoy!" was borne across the water upon the wind, and distinctly heard above the surging of the sea.

"Ahoy!"

"Strike your flag, or no quarter!"

"We're a Carthaginian cruiser!" replied Martinez, as, by the command of the captain, the flag of that State was displayed at the peak.

"What is it that he says?" inquired Count D'Oyley, who had hailed, to his young companion Montville, standing by his side; "a cruiser? a pirate, as his well-shotted guns told us but last night. Boarders, be ready! I may find here what I wish," he added, to himself, "or a guide to the present rendezvous of their chief. Lay her alongside!" he cried, as his vessel came nearer to the pirate. "Now grapple!" he shouted, in a loud, energetic voice; and the vessels came together with a dangerous shock.

Drawing his sword, he waved it over his head, and shouting to his men to follow him, he bounded over the bulwarks, and leaped with one bound upon the deck of the pirate, followed by Montville.

Before his men could equal his rapid movements, the pirate had discharged his broadside on the side next to the schooner. The recoil, and the simultaneous shock of a large wave breaking upon her stern, parted the two vessels with violence, and a succeeding wave, swelling to a vast height, bore them at a great distance apart.

The count was immediately engaged hand to hand with the Spaniard, and young Montville was saved from being run through the body in a dozen places by the interference of the captain, who, disarming him by a blow of his cutlass, thrust him down the companionway into the cabin.

"Vasht dere, mine mensh!" he cried to the crew, who were rushing upon the French officer; "vasht dere—let Martinez here have dis pretty pit o' fight to himself. A good poy is Martinez—let him fight—to be shure!" and while he spoke, the sword and cutlass of the two combatants, as they interchanged fierce and rapid blows, rung above the shouts of the hostile crews.

"Hold!—are you Lafitte?" suddenly cried Count D'Oyley, parrying the weapon of his antagonist.

"Yes, senor, if it please you, I am Lafitte!" replied Martinez, eagerly, after an instant's hesitation.

"Have at you, then—to the death!" cried the count, raining blows upon him with a skill and energy which it required all the Spaniard's activity and presence of mind to parry. The combat was long and desperate—the eyes of the Spaniard flashing the while with a snake-like brightness, and the countenance of the Frenchman glowing with fierce and determined energy. Three times had his sword passed through the arm of his opponent, who, with a chivalry worthy of a nobler cause, was willing to lose his life as the personator of Lafitte, rather than confess himself a less notable antagonist. His weapon once had gashed the breast of the Frenchman, when the captain, who had with difficulty restrained the buccaneers from rushing aft and cutting down the stranger, knocked up their weapons.

"Dis vill pe petter stopped, Martinez—dish ish mine prisoner—he vill make de ranshom monish. I vill tak' your sword, mynbeer."

The count, wounded and weak from loss of blood, surrendered it, and, at the command of the captain, was conducted by two of the crew into the cabin.

The mate hastily stanchd the blood from his slight wounds, looked over the side and saw the schooner at a distance, with her rudder shot away, tossed about at the mercy of the waves, and wholly incapable of renewing the contest. He then gave orders to make all sail for the rendezvous; and in a few minutes the xebec stood on her former course, under pressure of all her canvas.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PIRATES' RENDEZVOUS.

THE scenery of the northeastern portion of the Gulf of Gonzaves is varied by immense gorges, flanked by precipitous cliffs, indented with caverns.

These cliffs share the peculiar features of the wild scenery of this region; and caverns and ravines, nearly meeting above, are excavated, either by the hand of nature or some convulsion of her empire, in great numbers along their bases. The loftiest of these alpine branches, after running out into the sea more than half a league, terminates in a bluff about three hundred feet in height, whose verge, covered with rich woods, juts several yards out over the perpendicular face, like a roof. Beneath, the water was deep and clear, displaying, to one looking downward from the summit, thousands of many-colored sea-shells.

About twenty feet above the water, the face of the rock receded, leaving a terrace, against which a vessel might lie so closely that one could step from it onto her yards. It was about thirty feet broad, and upon it frowned a heavy gun placed on a carriage. Beyond it opened the mouth of a vast cavern, which with many sinuosities, penetrated far into the base of the cliff. The entrance was irregularly formed, in shape somewhat resembling a Gothic gateway, though of gigantic dimensions. In front of this entrance spread the broad Gulf of Gonzaves, which flowed unbroken to within about half a mile of the cavern. Here, with a loud roar, it met two nearly parallel ridges of high rocks, extending from the base of the cliff, leaving between them a narrow passage from the sea, quite to the foot of the rock, where it widened into a small basin forming a safe and convenient shelter.

This cavern had long been used by the buccaneers as a general rendezvous—a repository for their treasures, and a prison for those captives whom they detained for the purpose of drawing ransom for their liberation. Here also they resorted to repair their vessels, and to receive the instructions of Lafitte, who made this rendezvous of his fleet only second to that of Barrataria. To this place we now transport our readers, about a week after the expedition against the villa of Senor Velasquez.

The principal apartment of the grotto consisted of an interior chamber, illuminated by a solitary lamp, burning on a projecting shelf of the cave. It was about forty feet in diameter, and nearly circular, rising into a lofty dome, from the nave of which hung a stalactic mass, resembling, as it reflected in numerous brilliant points, the rays of the lamp beneath a stupendous chandelier.

The only entrance to the cavern, before which paced a sentinel, was narrow, and lighted near the outside by a lamp, which had once hung in a ship's cabin, suspended from the ceiling. From this passage branched others, for a short distance, terminating sometimes in small rooms, at others in deep pits and mere crevices in the rock.

In one of these recesses was spread a strip of carpet, strewn with bamboo leaves, upon which reclined a figure, half-obscured in the gloom of the deeply-shaded vault, and buried in sound, but feverish sleep. His head was uncovered, displaying a profusion of chestnut hair; his brow was pale, and his eyelids and temples were transparent from illness. His form was partly wrapped in a dark-blue cloak, upon the folds of which rested his left arm, bandaged as if to protect a wound. The rays of the lamp in the larger chamber, half-interrupted by the projecting sides of the niche, fell obliquely across the upper part of his face, leaving the lower portion in deep shadow. A broken saber and a shattered pistol lay near him, the relics of a recent fierce conflict between the prisoner (for such he was) and the young Spaniard Martinez, his captor, in attempting to escape from the grotto.

There was a deep silence in the cave, uninterrupted save by the breathing of the sleeper.

Suddenly the silence was broken by a low voice, apparently from some concealed recess, singing a plaintive air. The words were Castilian, and flowed from the lips of the invisible singer with melancholy cadence. The voice was silvery in its tones, yet the sleeper, like one on whom a finger is lightly laid, started and opened his eyes as the first notes fell upon his ear, and gazed wondering around him, as if spell-bound, until the last tremulous notes ceased, and silence reigned again throughout the apartment.

"Do I dream? That well-known voice! I surely must be dreaming!" he exclaimed, starting with energy and strength from his couch, and gazing wildly around him. "Ah! it was but a sweet delusion. This cave! this wounded arm—alas! I am a prisoner! Kind Heaven, I thank thee for this happy dream!" he exclaimed, fervently. "And is it indeed but a dream? May not her released spirit have been hovering over me in my sleep, and soothing my burning slumbers with that air I loved to hear her sing on earth. Oh, blessed spirit!" he fervently cried, dropping upon his knee, under the influence of his fevered imagination, "if thou art indeed near me, bless me with

that angelic melody. Sweet Constanza! if I may not see thee, let me once more hear thy voice."

"Who calls upon the name of Constanza?" he heard, in the liquid and melancholy accents of the song.

"Mon Dieu! it is—it is she!" he exclaimed, identity of circumstances, and places, and recollection of the causes which brought him there, suddenly returning. "It is—it is she—Constanza! Constanza! speak! are you there?" he cried, turning to the side of the niche from which the voice proceeded, and placing his lips to the thin stalactic wall. "It is D'Oyley that addresses you!"

"Alphonse!—my own Alphonse!" she exclaimed, her voice trembling between hope and fear; "can it be you?—no! no! Alphonse is far, far away, and knows not the fate of his poor Constanza!"

"God of heaven! it is indeed Constanza!" exclaimed the count, assured. "Dear Constanza, I have come to release you—it is your own Alphonse! and no other! Is there no way of getting to you?" he cried, suddenly endowed with almost supernatural strength, at the same time eagerly seeking some mode of ingress to that part of the cavern where she was evidently imprisoned. There was no reply from within to his anxious inquiry.

"Tell me, Constanza," he continued, raising his voice; "do you know the passage that leads from without to your apartment? Direct me, and I will pass out—master my guard—enter, and rescue you! Speak—dear Constanza!" he earnestly added; but the echoes of his own voice through the hollow cavern, alone replied to his eager words.

"She must have fainted, or—Heaven be blessed! here is a passage!" he added, with delight, as his eye glanced from the stalactic drapery separating the vaults, to a heavy iron pike lying on the pavement; "this shall do my purpose!"

Grasping the weapon, he struck with violence upon the brittle surface of the wall, and repeating the blow, with additional force, the stalactic sheet gave way. In a few moments, under his heavy strokes, a breach was made after repeating his efforts, a large mass fell inward and left a broad aperture. With an exclamation of joyful surprise, he sprang through the passage into the apartment.

It was an immense chamber, dimly lighted by a lamp, suspended in chains, from the low ceiling. He paused a moment at the entrance, to give his vision power to perceive, through the half-illuminated darkness, the dimensions and details of the vault.

Through a crevice above, he saw, faintly shining into the aperture, the moon, which, probably associated with the thoughts of her lover, suggested the song he had heard. There appeared only one inlet to the apartment, on the opposite side. In the center of the chamber, under a kind of canopy made of canvas, was spread a rug, dyed with many brilliant colors. An old negress sat upon her heels, at the side of it, fast asleep, yet mechanically waving over the unoccupied carpet a tuft of feathers. A basket of fruit, and a silver basin of spring water, stood near her, and various costly articles of the toilet, a clasped missal, and a guitar, lay upon a velvet cushion, placed at the head of the mat.

There was, besides, no other furniture in the vast cavern, which was silent and desolate, its distant extremities scarcely visible in the perpetual darkness which reigned there.

"Where can she have disappeared?" exclaimed the lover, as his eye surveyed these details, without meeting the object he sought.

Springing into the chamber he started as he beheld the lifeless form of the Castilian maiden lying by the side of a fallen stalactic pillar.

He knelt by her side, and placed his lips to her own. They were scarcely warm with life, and the throbbing of her heart was faint, and her pulse, as he pressed his finger upon her wrist, was like the dying vibration of a harp-string. He bore her to the canopy, and placed her upon the humble couch, which, by the kindness of Theodore, had been placed in the chamber, awoke the old negress, and with her aid, after a long time, restored her to consciousness.

"Blessed Maria! where am I?" faintly inquired the maiden, as she gazed around her. "Did I hear his voice? can it be real? Oh! it was too much—too much joy!" and she looked eagerly up into the face of the negress.

"Juana, is it only you?" she added, in a disappointed tone. "Of what was I thinking?"

Again she closed her eyes, as if endeavoring to recall some pleasing vision.

"Did you not hear a voice, Juana? It was his—yes, it must have been his! I thought it Lafitte's; he can speak like him, when he will. But it was *his*. D'Oyley's! Oh, my own Alphonse, where are you?"

"Alphonse is near you, dear Constanza! look up," said the count, and she felt her hand pressed ardently, while a warm kiss was imprinted upon her lips.

Opening her eyes, she fixed them full upon her lover, who had retired a little, when ani-

mation first returned, lest his sudden presence, like the sound of his voice, should again throw her into insensibility.

"Is it, indeed, Alphonse?" she joyfully exclaimed.

And for a moment they were locked in each other's embrace.

"What," she at length said, "have I not suffered!"

"I know it. I know all, Constanza! But, let us think of escape; can you sit up?" he added.

"Oh, what have I not suffered!" she repeated, leaning her head upon his shoulder and bursting into tears. "I know not how, amidst all the dreary scenes I have passed through, I have retained my reason. And yet I live! and bless thee, dear Maria! all I love on earth is by my side; my own Alphonse!"

And she clung to him as if she feared he would again be separated from her.

We will briefly pass over the story Constanza related to the count, in which she detailed the incidents connected with her disappearance from her father's roof—her liberation by the pirate—her second capture by one of his vessels and her landing, the day before, at the cave. She also informed him of the departure of the vessel which captured her, on another expedition, spoke of her lonely and desolate situation in the cavern, whither she was conveyed on leaving the vessel, and, in grateful terms, mentioned the kindness of young Theodore, who had visited her occasionally, and shown those attentions to her comfort, with which she was surrounded. He had also secured to her, notwithstanding the objections of Sebastian, the attendance of Juana; who, with the fidelity peculiar to the African slave, had never left her from the time of her capture.

CHAPTER XV.

THE BATTLE WITH THE CRUISER.

THE night had far advanced before the Castilian maiden completed her relation.

"Dearest Constanza, how much you have passed through!" said the count, after listening to the recital of her adventures—"and this Lafitte—he has magnanimity of soul, which, in a man of his lawless character, surprises me. But men, however lost to virtue, are never wholly depraved. The celestial spark will yet linger in the heart, although hidden from the eyes of men, and now and then will suddenly break out into flame.

"I must meet this man. There is a nobleness about him that captivates me, and the more so that it was unlooked for. Now that you are safe, dearest Constanza, my revenge is gone; yet I would know and redeem this extraordinary man. But," he added quickly, "let us escape from this fearful spot. He is not present to control the wild beings that surround us. There are several boats lying in the basin. Once out of the cavern—we can seize one of them, and a few hours' sail will take us to the Mole, near Cape St. Nicholas, where we shall be safe from pursuit. This Theodore, of whom you speak so warmly—will he not favor our escape?"

"Ask him not, Alphonse! Ask him not; although his benefactor be an outlaw, let us not tempt him to betray him. I would rather wait the return of Lafitte, than implicate this youth in our escape; for if we should desire his assistance he would not refuse it."

"You are right, noble girl! There is," he continued in a low, eager tone, "but a single sentinel at the mouth of the grotto—and here are weapons!" he exclaimed, with joyful surprise, as his eye rested upon a pair of pistols left by Theodore, "and loaded, too! With these, and this pike, I can overcome all opposition. Come, Constanza, my brave one! this shall be the last trial of your fortitude. Lean upon my arm—heavier! the occasion has given me back my full strength. Juana, will you go with us—or stay with the pirates?"

"Oh! Juana will go with young buckra lady. If she be nigger, she lub de lily 'ooman. Ol' Juana neber leab her if massa say."

"Take up that basket of fruit, and this carpet and cushion, to place in the boat, and follow then, good Juana," he said to her, placing the pistols in his belt.

Then conducting Constanza through the breach he had made in the wall, he led her into the chamber he had himself occupied.

"And here was your prison, Alphonse!" she said with feeling; "how lonely you must have been here; and wounded, too! But blessed be the kind Maria for this meeting! If we escape not—I can die cheerfully in your arms. Happy thought! If we fail in effecting our escape from this dreadful place, we can die together. Oh, let us hasten, Alphonse!"

The count lingered a moment to remove the lamp from the wall. "Here, Juana," he said, giving it to the slave, "go before with this light; we will follow some distance behind you in the darkness. The sentinel will perhaps let you pass to the outside. Should he stop you to ask any questions draw him aside, and so glare the light upon his eyes that we may pass him unseen. Have you tact enough for it?"

"Hil yes, massa; Juana un'stand ebry t'ing—she know how mak' fool ob Gaspar."

They had traversed the pavement beneath the dome and entered a dark passage, which, after a few steps, grew broader and higher, and as they proceeded, the cool wind came circling past them, from without.

"Hold, Juana!" he called, in a suppressed voice, "we are now near the mouth of the cave. Do you recollect my instructions?" he inquired, as the negress obeyed him.

The report of a cannon without drowned her reply.

"Hark! what is that? A gun—another—a cannonading! Heaven avert danger! Constanza, my dearest one! be not alarmed!" he said, feeling the form of the maiden shrink and tremble, as the loud reports fell upon her ear, "exert all your firmness, for now you will require it all!" he added, cheerfully and encouragingly, as he warmly pressed her hand, and parted the rich hair, to imprint a kiss upon her brow.

"I will—I will—Alphonse! It was but a momentary weakness. I will nerve myself for this hour of trial, and strive to be worthy of you."

"Thank you, dearest. Now remain here in this niche, with your faithful Juana, while I go and reconnoiter. Nay, do not be alarmed, I shall not expose myself to danger. I cannot forget that your life and happiness depend upon my caution. I will be with you in a moment!" and, as rapidly as the darkness would permit, feeling his way with his pike, he advanced toward the entrance of the cave.

The firing still continued and every succeeding report appeared nearer. Suddenly a ray of light penciled along the wall caught his eye, and turning an abrupt angle a lamp suspended above him glared brightly upon his face. Starting back into the shadow of a projecting rock, he looked cautiously forward. The mouth of the cave was at some distance; beyond it appeared a glimpse of the moonlit bay and the figure of a man, relieved against the sky, was standing upon a projecting rock far from the entrance of the grotto. This he concluded must be the guard, who had left his post, attracted by the cannonading, with which was now mingled the firing of musketry and the shouts of combatants.

The count passed hastily under the lamp and approached the entrance with a noiseless step. Within a few feet of the exterior was a shelf, elevated several feet above the floor. This he lightly ascended, fearing to emerge into the moonlight, where the sentinel might observe him. From this point, thrown into shadow by the overhanging arch of the cave, he obtained an unobstructed view of the strait which formed a channel of communication between the base of the cliff and the open sea.

About a mile from the shore clouds of smoke rested upon the water, through which could be seen the sails and spars of a large vessel, apparently a brig, from which the roar and flash of cannon was incessant. Nearer the shore and just entering the narrow avenue leading from the sea in the basin at the foot of the cave was a large schooner under press of sail, occasionally discharging a gun at the other vessel, which appeared to be in chase of her.

In a few moments after the count had climbed to the shelf, the cannonading ceased, the dense volume of smoke rolled away over the water to the leeward shore and circling up the cliff, settled upon the summits. The moon again shone quietly upon the bay, whitening the canvas of the approaching vessel, which was now sailing up the strait. The larger craft was discovered lying to and three boats put off from her, apparently filled with armed men—for the light glanced from many musket barrels and cutlasses as the boats pulled silently and rapidly to the shore.

"A buccaneer chased in by a cruiser!" he exclaimed. "Heaven grant she may be captured. There is a better chance of our escape than I looked for—if victory side with the right."

The schooner now approached so near the termination of the rocky passage, that the voices on board reached his ears, accompanied by the sound of hasty feet upon her deck, the creaking of rigging, and the rushing of the water as she plowed it up before her. He watched her until she came so close to the cliffs that the tops of her masts were level with his eye, when she bore up into the basin at the base of the rock and was laid with great skill alongside its perpendicular face.

Loud voices of men, mingled with fierce oaths and execrations, and groans of wounded men, now rose tumultuously from below.

"Ho, there! Gaspar! the rock, ho!" shouted a stern voice. "Are you asleep? Bring the gun to bear upon the nearest barge and fire!"

Gaspar, who had deserted his post for a moment to witness the chase, sprang back to the platform, and swinging the piece round, leveled it at the boat; then rushing into the cave, passing directly beneath the count, he lighted a match at the distant lamp, and returning, applied the flaming rope to the loaded piece.

A deafening report followed; the nearest boat became at once a scene of confusion, and shrieks and loud voices filled the air.

"Bravely done, my good Gaspar!" said a man ascending the rigging of the schooner,

after stepping along the foretop-sail-yard, and springing upon the ledge of rocks.

"This must be Lafitte himself," he said mentally.

The individual who attracted his attention turning at the moment, the moon shone full upon his face, displaying his fine aquiline features, his dark brow, eyes, and brown cheek.

"It is indeed he! That face and form can belong to no other!" he exclaimed, drawing himself further within the shadow of the rock, that he might observe unseen, the movements of the buccaneers.

The pirate chief had hardly ascended to the platform before he was followed by a dozen of his crew, who, with astonishing rapidity, mounted the rigging after him, each man heavily armed, and many of them wild and fierce-looking beings, nearly as tawny and naked as savages.

"Ho, there, below!" he shouted. "Bring the guns to bear on those boats, and rake them as they come up the passage."

The boats, one of which had evidently been struck by the shot from the gun discharged by Gaspar, rapidly advanced, although the one injured by the ball, and which had taken the lead on starting, was now laboriously pulling on last of all.

They had yet some distance to row directly in range of the gun on the platform, and exposed to the fire of the pirate's schooner, which was drawn up before it, her broadside presenting a formidable battery to the enemy.

"Let them come within pistol-shot!" exclaimed the leader, "then wait the word to fire. Aim every piece at the stern of each boat. Powder and balls here, for this gun! Charge her briskly, men! and with double shot. Ho, the Gertrude!" he shouted, looking down upon the deck of his vessel—"think you have men enough on board, Ricardo, to hold her? If too hard pressed, retreat and join us; they are sending another boat from the brig. We shall have enough to do; be cool and firm. Remember all of you, we fight at an advantage, and no man will forget that he fights for his head."

"Fire, Ricardo!" he cried in a loud voice after giving his orders, and disposing his men on different parts of the platform, and around the gun. "Sink that nearest boat, and you shall command the schooner."

Half a dozen flashes gleamed above the rock, and the whole broadside of the schooner, which commanded the breadth of the channel, was discharged at once. As soon as the smoke enveloping the platform was blown away, the pirate bent an eager eye upon the boats: to his astonishment, they still approached uninjured, and with renewed velocity.

"Ha! who aimed those guns?" he shouted in a voice of thunder. "Men! you shall rue such boy's play. Away from this gun!"—as he spoke, he swept a circle around him with his cutlass; and springing to the gun, with a single hand, he wheeled it to the verge and depressed it upon the leading boat. Then, snatching a match from one of his men, he applied it to the powder.

"Ha! blessed St. Antonio," he exclaimed, as a loud crash, accompanied by shouts and yells, followed the report: the smoke drifting away, he beheld a score of men struggling in the water, and clinging to the oars and fragments of their shattered boat.

"Fire upon them, men," he shouted; "make your pistols ring merrily! One more broadside, Ricardo, and I forgive the last," he cried, with exultation in his voice and manner.

But the other boats were now too near for the large guns to bear upon them; and emerging from the straits, they rapidly approached, one on the quarter, and the other on the bows of the schooner. Those of the crew belonging to the last boat who were not shot in the head as they swam, were either picked up by the other boats, or gained the rocks on the opposite side of the basin, or with uncooled daring reached the schooner just as the remaining two boats touched her sides.

With the courage of lions, the men, till now passive, leaped from their boats, and poured over the vessel's quarter and bows in spite of the desperate struggles of the buccaneers, to hurl them back into the water. In a few seconds her decks exhibited a scene of fearful carnage. The pirates were overpowered by the superior numbers of their opponents, and began to give way. Their chief, who had grasped a stay, and was about descending to endeavor to turn the tide of battle, witnessing the unequal contest, paused and shouted to them to mount, and leave the vessel to the enemy.

All at once the rigging was alive with the pirates, who ascended, with often practiced activity, before their astonished foes, and threw themselves from the yards upon the terrace.

"Up, men, follow them!" cried the leader of the party who had boarded the vessel; "never let American tars be outdone by those cowardly Spanish cut throats!"

He sprang into the rigging as he spoke, rapidly followed by his band; and ascending the shrouds with reckless daring, he gained the top-mast cross-trees, hastened along the yard and

leaped upon the terrace into the midst of his foes, cutlass in hand, before his real character was discovered.

"Over with him!" cried a dozen voices. "Heave him into the sea!" and a host of cutlasses were brandished about his head.

But he was so rapidly seconded by his men, who jumped from the yards upon the rock as fast as they could follow one another, that the pirates had not time to deal him a fatal blow, before each one found himself in mortal combat with an American sailor.

The fight was long and bloody. Living men were hurled upon the deck of the vessel below with terrific violence, or into the flood beneath. Blood flowed like water, and the cries, groans, and shouts of the combatants rose wildly in the air, multiplied into a thousand echoes among the cliffs. The pirates numbered about fifty, and the force of the Americans was nearly equal. The deck of the vessel was deserted, save by wounded and slain men, locked in the deadly embrace in which they had fallen from the cliff. The contest raged fiercely directly in front of the cavern, and the pirates at last, hotly pressed, retreated to its mouth.

At this point their leader rallied his men. His form, like that of the genius directing the battle, the count had seen moving wherever the fight raged hottest.

"Press him hard—drive him to his den, my hearties!" shouted the officer who had first ascended the rigging, and who, throughout the whole conflict, had fought with that daring and unabated energy for which American sailors are distinguished.

As he spoke, he rushed upon Lafitte, who, with only half the original number of his men, stood fighting hand to hand with a tall seaman.

The count had remained in his concealment a witness of the conflict, until the pirates retreated toward the mouth of the cavern, just within which he was concealed. As they filled the entrance, full of alarm for Constanza, whom he had left in the grotto, he suddenly sprang from the elevated station upon which he had stood during the fight, and fled toward the interior of the cave. But the noise he had made in escaping alarmed the buccaneers, who turned and gazed after his retreating figure with astonishment.

"We are surprised!" shouted several voices, and two or three of the pirates darted in pursuit of him, and before he could pass round the angle in the passage, near which the lamp was suspended, he was compelled to turn upon his pursuers and defend his life. Two of them assailed him at once, and he had only his pike to parry the blows of their cutlasses, when a thrust of his weapon through the sword arm of one of them caused him to drop his cutlass, which, with an exclamation of joy, the count seized, and using it skillfully upon his unwounded antagonist, soon disabled him. But before he could avail himself of the advantage, he was assailed by others of the band, who on hearing the cry that they were taken in the rear, left the platform, and turned their blades upon their new enemy. The passage was narrow, scarcely admitting the wielding of their weapons with full effect.

At this point, the fight now became desperate. Driven into the cave by their opponents and finding their way obstructed in the rear, the buccaneers fought like fiends. Five of them fell beneath the cutlass of the count, who, fearing the fatal consequences of their entrance to Constanza's safety, and aware that his own life also was at stake, and actuated, moreover, by a desire to second the attack of the American sailors, fought with the power and effect of a mailed phalanx in his single arm.

The American officer had fallen severely wounded before the vigorous attacks of the outlaw, whom he had fearlessly encountered, and leaving the less distinguished of his antagonists to his men, the victor turned upon the daring stranger, who, single-handed, stood defending the narrow passage.

"Santo Diab! whom have we here? Give back, men—give back! he has sent enough of you to the devil," and treading over the dead bodies of his men, who had fallen by the hand of the desperate Frenchman, he shouted:

"Let me cross blades with this stranger," aiming, as he spoke, a blow at the head of the count, which he parried and returned with the skill of a master of the weapon.

For several seconds their rapidly clashing cutlasses rung together, flashing in the light of the lamp suspended above their heads.

The count, weak from his former wounds, and bleeding from fresh ones, at length began to evince signs of exhaustion. His opponent discovered this, and changing his mode of fighting, used all his skill to disarm and take him prisoner.

"Surrender, sir—it is madness to contend against such odds," cried the pirate.

The only reply he received was a stroke from the count's cutlass, which nearly cleft the thick cap he wore, through to his head. Enraged, the pirate raised his weapon, throwing all his muscular power into his arms for a decisive blow, when a wild shriek rung through the vault, and Constanza appeared before them,

with a terrified eye, her luxuriant tresses disheveled and floating over her shoulders, and her mantilla disarranged in her struggles to break away from her faithful attendant, who had in vain striven to detain her.

The pirate started at the shriek and form of the maiden, indistinctly seen in the obscurity of the cavern, and instantly arrested his weapon, but too late to withhold the blow, which descended with half its original force upon the defenseless head of the count. He staggered and fell into the arms of Constanza, who, with an eye in which timidity had given place to resolution, caught his head upon her bosom, over which sprinkled the warm blood of her lover—and erecting her figure to its full height, she drew a pistol from his belt, and leveled it at the heart of the buccaneer. The motion brought her brow under the full light of the lamp, and with an exclamation of surprise, he recognized in those beautiful features, stamped with heroic energy and woman's self-devotion, the fair Castilian, for whom, but a few days before, he had made magnanimous sacrifice of his love.

"Senora Velasquez! can it be?" he cried, in amazement. Then instantly changing his tone, he laid his hand upon his heart, and said, with a voice of emotion and humility, "Fire, lady!—thus be expiated my crime!"

The pistol dropped from her hand.

"Lafitte!" she exclaimed after an instant's silent surprise, during which doubt and confidence struggled within her bosom. "Oh, what have you done? This is your bloody deed. Help! help! or he will die in my arms!" and tearing her mantilla, she attempted to stanch the blood which flowed freely from a cut in his head.

"Forgive! forgive, lady!" cried the chief, springing to her assistance. "Leave this wounded stranger to me—those shouts tell me the enemy are retreating. Go, senora, I will attend you; such a scene as this is not for your presence. Leave him to my care. I see you feel an interest in him—that is enough for me. He shall be cared for as if he were a brother—nay, nay," he added, suddenly changing countenance; "as if he were Constanza Velasquez," and he spoke the last words with tenderness and emotion.

She resigned him to his arms, and said, earnestly: "Bear him into the inner cave. The light, Juana!" and with eager footsteps she preceded the outlaw, who bore the wounded officer in his arms. Entering the cave originally occupied by the count, and directing him to be laid on the bamboo rushes in the niche, she knelt beside him, and, forgetful of the presence of the chief, seemed wholly absorbed in her wounded lover.

By the activity of Juana, the presence of mind and experience of the outlaw, and the angelic tenderness of the maiden, all those attentions his wounded state required were completed. He had not been fully unconscious, although he betrayed his sense of consciousness only by an occasional writhing of his features. At length he fell into a broken sleep.

From the moment she knelt by his couch, she had remained silent; but when the eyes of her lover closed, she looked up into the face of Lafitte, who, after his services were no longer required, stood, with folded arms and a thoughtful brow, gazing in silence upon the scene.

"Senor Lafitte!" said the lady, "did you know of his capture?"

"No, lady, nor of your own! I am surrounded with mystery. Why do I find you here? Why this interest in this wounded man? Ah! can it be so?" he suddenly exclaimed. "Lady, this officer is—"

"The Count D'Oyley of the French navy, senor, to whom I am betrothed," she said, with feeling and dignity.

The face of the pirate changed, and a slight flush passed across his brow. But this momentary exhibition of feeling immediately gave place to an expression of interest.

"Lady!" he said, with a slight embarrassment in his manner, "this officer shall be cared for. I regard him as a sacred trust! Moreover, he is free from this moment! Tell me how you came to be once more a captive? Explain this mystery, which I cannot fathom."

She briefly related to him the incidents of her recapture, and her conveyance to the cavern—the expedition of her lover—his capture—their meeting in the cavern—and their attempt to make their escape, just as his vessel was chased in by the American cruiser.

"Would to God, lady, you had both escaped before I had met you again! But, adieu! Senora, I must leave you for the present," he added, as the report of the gun before the entrance of the cavern reverberated through the long passages of the grotto. "Where is Theodore, lady? I will send him to you."

"I know not, senor; but perhaps he is near. He was sleeping in the outer apartment, by the door, when I left it. I thank you, senor," she continued, struck with the outlaw's delicacy in proposing Theodore to watch with the count. Juana will call him. Happy youth!—he has slept amid all this storm of death!"

A loud shout without, now called Lafitte

away, after assuring her that she should be sacred from intrusion. Once more left alone by the couch of her lover, clasping her hands and raising her full eyes to heaven, she remained several minutes—the lamp painting, with light and shade, her lovely face—lost in devotion.

"Thy will, not mine, be done," she said, aloud, with a voice of resignation, as she rose from her devotional attitude. With a more cheerful brow and lighter heart, she turned and addressed her young attendant, Theodore, who, with surprise pictured upon his countenance, was listening to the strange recital of the events of the night, which Juana, with characteristic volubility, was detailing to her.

"Shame upon my drowsy eyes," he said, with evident mortification in his manner. "You find me but a poor page, lady. But who is this pale stranger?" he exclaimed, inquiringly, as his eye fell upon the handsome features of the wounded count.

"He is an officer of the French navy—the Count D'Oyley. You have heard me speak of him, Theodore," she added, with a faint and sweet smile. "He is severely wounded; I fear I shall require your aid to nurse him."

The youth expressed his devotion to her slightest wish, and placing himself near the sleeper, passed the succeeding hours of the night in listening to the thrilling narrative of the maiden, with an absorbing interest that annihilated all time but the present moment.

CHAPTER XVI.

A STRUGGLE BETWEEN HONOR AND WRONG.

THE morning broke upon the watchers, and found them still by the bedside of the wounded officer. His wound had been rather a severe contusion with the side of the pirate's weapon, than a deep cut. After passing the remainder of the night in feverish slumber, he awoke, as the hand of the maiden was gently parting the hair from his brow.

"Is it you, Constanza?" he said, with a faint smile, the whole scene of the preceding night coming at once to his recollection. "Have you been watching by me through the long hours of the night? How very kind! But speak!" he added, suddenly, and rising; "tell me, where is my antagonist—the buccaner who wounded me? Did I not see you near me when I fell? I have a half-consciousness of being caught by you. Devoted Constanza, was it not so? And was I not borne by some one back to this cave? Who was it? Was he wounded by me? Or you, dearest—were you hurt?" he continued, with feverish rapidity, looking anxiously into her face, as the various scenes he had passed through came indistinctly and unconnected to his mind.

"Nay, nay, dear Alphonse! I cannot reply to all your rapid questions. You must not rise so soon; be quiet. There is no danger to you or me."

"But I am better, dearest," he said, playing with a truant tress upon her temples—"I am better; my sleep has been refreshing."

"But your wound?"

"It is but slight, although it must have been given with a good will at the time—a little patch will make all sound again. But, my sweet Constanza, do not be alarmed! Who was the pirate that fought so fiercely? Ah!" he suddenly exclaimed, as his eye rested upon the slight form of young Theodore, who stood within the niche; "whom have we here?"

"The youth, Theodore, of whom I spoke," she replied.

"Ah! I remember. Monsieur Theodore, pardon me, young sir. I owe you better courtesy than neglect. You have loaded me with a debt of gratitude."

"Speak of that at another time, monsieur. Now your health requires silence and repose," replied the youth, remarking the mixture of indecision and energy in his manner and language, which he attributed to the fever from his wound.

"Not so, my good youth; I must thank you now. Yet I know not how! You are a sailor," he continued after a moment's thought; "will you take a midshipman's berth on board the Sultan? This is no life for one like you to lead."

"I thank you, but I need no reward; if I have deserved any, for performing my duty, I have sufficiently received it by knowing that I have been instrumental in adding to this lady's happiness. A kind word from her lips is more than I dare hope to ask!" he added, with a blushing brow.

"You are modest for a *protege* of Lafitte," he replied, smilingly; "but this lady will not only give you words of kindness, I think, but her white hand to kiss! will you not, Constanza? And this, as you hint, were honor enough for belted knight in days of Charlemagne."

Constanza, with a smile, presented her hand to the youth, who, bending over it with an air of devout respect, pressed his lips lightly to the taper fingers.

At this instant a footfall was heard echoing through the chamber Constanza had recently occupied, and she had hardly said:

"It is Lafitte!" when the outlaw appeared at the breach in the stalactic drapery of the cave, and, before passing into the apartment, gazed silently for a few seconds upon the group.

We will now return to the period when Lafitte left the lovers, after the count had fallen asleep. He traversed the long passage with a rapid tread and an aching heart. The terrace he found strewn with the dead and dying. Several of his men were leaning with an air of fatigue against the side of the cliff, or upon the cannon, which had just been fired at the retreating Americans, who, driven over the verge, sprung into the water or slid down the stairs to the deck, with the loss of more than half their number besides two wounded officers, whom they bore from the deck into the boats, and pulled rapidly down the passage to their vessel.

"Ho, Carlos! below there!" he shouted.

"Carlos es muerto!" said faintly a wounded pirate, who rested on his cutlass.

"Dead? Ho, the deck there—fire upon that boat! Do you mean to let them man the brig again and blockade us? Fire!"

"No es posible, señor!" cried one from the schooner. "Los Americanos have spike all de gun."

"Spiked the guns! Maldicho! how was that done, Mateo?"

"No see, señor; no es posible to tell. I hear de click, click, five, six time, when one sailor run over de gun to de boat; and when I put de prime ob de horn in de hole, dere was no hole dere, all fill up with big rusty nail."

"Spiked, ha! well, let them go—they will be glad enough to get out of this, and show the old rock the stern of their brig," he said, quietly.

Having with much humanity taken care of the wounded, and given orders for the disposal of the dead, he placed the watch for the remainder of the night, and then, last of all, attended to his own wounds which, though not severe, were numerous. Then re-entering the cavern, passing the spot which the count had defended, and from which the bodies had been removed, he traversed the gallery for a few yards and turned into one of those recesses the fugitives had supposed to be niches, which opened before him as he advanced, increasing in height and breadth. Although perfectly dark, he traversed it with an unfaltering footstep, and like one familiar with its details.

About seventy paces from the main passage he came into a small, vaulted apartment, lighted fitfully by the flickering flame of an expiring fire, kindled near its center against a fragment of rock which had fallen from the side of the grotto and rolled into the middle of the floor. Several chests, such as seamen use to contain their apparel, camp-stools, a round table with a marble top, piles of cordage, rolls of canvas and heaps of old sails, with many other articles necessary to the repair and preservation of vessels, filled the sides of the apartment.

On a shelf at the extremity of the cave stood a mirror, the light of a man, with radii diverging from a point near the center, as if a bullet had shattered it. One of the chests, the lid of which was up, displayed a number of cutlasses and pistols; and a pyramid of shot, adapted to the caliber of the piece of ordnance at the mouth of the cave, was piled at one end of it; and laid against the wall, tied up like fagots, were several bundles of pikes. In a distant niche, placed one upon another, were several kegs, half-seen indistinctly in the obscurity, covered by a tarpaulin, and branded gunpowder.

This part of the grotto was evidently appropriated by the buccaners as their armory, store-room, hall of feasting and carousing.

As the outlaw entered, it was silent and deserted, except by the ungainly figure of his slave, who lay with his naked feet to the fire, his head closely wrapped in a soiled blanket, fast asleep.

Lafitte gazed upon the scene around him with a bitter smile.

"And this," he said, with a clouded brow, after standing a while in silence, "this is my abode! the outlaw's home! This is my domestic hearth—this my social board! For the plaudits of such as I command—for the boast of a beast like this slave—is it for this I live? Alas! I have lived in vain! all, all in vain!" and he paced the cave with an agitated step, while detestation for his present life, aspirations for an honorable career, and love for the Castilian maiden, filled his mind with conflicting emotions.

"She is in my power once more," he hoarsely whispered; "have I not made sufficient sacrifice in letting her once depart? Is my passion again to be immolated upon the altar of self-denial? Yet I may not justly use the power I possess. I love her—and only by honorable love shall she be sued! But will she listen? Listen! Am I mad? Listen with her hand upon the brow, and kneeling beside the couch, of her betrothed husband! Success is now doubly walled against me. But if he die!—ah, if he die!—as he may—as he must!" he added with a ringing voice, giving utterance to the guilty thoughts which stirred his bosom. But sudden-

ly checking himself, he continued, in a lower tone:

"No, no, no!—I am sick of crime! Back, back, tempter—I will win her fairly. Am I indeed so base as to wish this maiden ill—to think of destroying so much happiness, when I can make it bliss? If he should not live—then! then, perhaps! But no—oh, God, no! Have I not stricken the blow—and will she place her hand in mine red with her lover's blood? Will she give her heart to be healed by him who broke it? But time, perhaps, may mitigate and veil over the bitter memory of the past—and then," and his step became more elastic, and his brow clearer, as he spoke. But it as suddenly changed again. "Alas! there is no hope for me!—she can never—never love me! Her spirit is too pure to mingle with mine. It is vain for me to hope—yet I must love her—love her—forever! I will school myself to think of her without passion—worship her as a lovely incarnation of the Virgin!"

For an hour he paced the grotto.

"I will—I will!" he at length said, suddenly stopping. "She shall respect, if she cannot love me! Only with gratitude shall she remember Lafitte! They shall both be free, and this very day I myself will take them to Port-au-Prince. If I cannot make my own happiness, I will not mar theirs—nay, I will make it. As I now feel," he continued, and his voice became calmer, "I think I could place her hand within his, and bid Heaven bless them. Then I could seek an early death on the battle-field, or in the seclusion of a monastery atone for my past life by penance and prayer. Penance and prayer!" he repeated, with an altered voice, while a disdainful expression dwelt upon his lip, as if he had given utterance to thoughts of which he became at once ashamed; "ay—beads and rosaries! genuflexions and ablutions, fasts and confessions! cowl and gown! truly these would well become me! Yet, for all that, it may yet be to what my coward heart will drive me. Nevertheless, this lady shall go free, whatever be my future fate."

He then threw himself upon one of the rude couches, and bringing the butt of his pistols round to the ready grasp of his hand, he sought the oblivion of sleep.

At dawn he awoke refreshed, and with calmer feeling. Low voices struck his ear from the recess. He listened a moment in surprise, and then rising quickly, unlocked the door communicating with it, and entered the apartment formerly occupied by Constanza.

The canopy and other preparations made by the order and attention of Theodore for her comfort, caught his eye—for all parts of the cave were now visible by the daylight penetrating through the crevices and apertures of the roof. His rapid glance also detected the breach made by the count, in his efforts to release Constanza, and he at once understood its object; and as he was advancing to examine it, the voices of the party in the adjoining chamber fell distinctly upon his ear.

"Hail my captive lover is better, it seems," he exclaimed. "But, he has made a soldier's breach through the wall. Constanza was, then, placed here by that prosing fool, Sebastian; and thick-skulled Dutch Getzendanner must place his prisoner within ear-shot. It is said there is no separating true lovers, and here is most visible proof of it. Cielos! what have we here? the maiden's sparkling crucifix, dropped in her flight," he suddenly added, eagerly seizing the jewel which had caught his eye. "This next my heart forever!" he fervently exclaimed, pressing it to his lips—"this shall be twice worshiped—to heaven and love I devote it," and he hung it around his neck by its chain, concealing the cross in his bosom.

"*Protege* of Lafitte!" he repeated with bitter emphasis, as he overheard the words of D'Oyley. "Monsieur Le Comte thinks there can come nothing good out of Nazareth! How cavalierly he gives away the lady's hand to the boy's lip! Pity so fair a scene should be interrupted."

"*Senora, buenos dias tenga usted.* Monsieur Comte, I trust you are much better. Theodore, you are welcome back again!" and as he entered the chamber, he grasped the hand of the boy with a smile of pleasure—bowed coldly to the count, who was sitting on his couch of bamboo-rushes in the niche, and with an air of profound respect, bent low to the maiden.

"Pardon this intrusion, *senora*; I knew not of this passage between the rooms, it having been made since my last visit to our rendezvous, probably for greater facilities of intercourse;" and he smiled meaningly, as he glanced from one to the other; "and hearing voices, I came to learn from whence they proceeded."

"Monsieur," he continued, "I am happy to see you so far recovered from your wounds. You are at liberty to depart when you are well enough to be removed."

"I thank you, Monsieur Lafitte," replied the count, courteously; "my wound was but trifling. I am able to move; but, monsieur, permit me to say how profoundly I feel your kindness extended toward this lady!"

"Enough, count! I followed my own feelings in this matter. It is not for you to thank me," he said, sternly; "speak of your freedom."

"If I am at liberty, then, as you say, I would leave at once. Have you any news of my schooner? I presume you have heard the particulars of my capture?"

"Yes, monsieur, in a few words from Gaspar. Of your vessel I have not heard. I will take you to Port-au-Prince in my schooner as soon as she undergoes some repairs. She will be ready by the morning."

"Thank you, monsieur; and this lady?"

"Shall accompany you, sir!" he replied in a deep voice, that drew the eye of the count to his face, which reflected the agitation of his mind, produced by the question, and the associations it called up.

"*Sacre!*" exclaimed the count, suspicions of the cause of Lafitte's emotion suddenly flashing across his mind.

"Are you in pain, Alphonse?" inquired Constanza, with a changing cheek, as she remarked his excited manner.

"No! yes! great, great pain!" and he laid his hand upon his breast.

Lafitte smiled scornfully, and his lip curled with an expression of contempt.

Shortly after, vexed at the silence of Constanza, who had not raised her eyes from her lover's face since his entrance, he left the cave accompanied by Theodore, whom he took with him, to ascertain more particularly than he had learned from Gaspar, the details of their capture, and the events succeeding it.

While Lafitte neglected nothing that would contribute to the comfort of Constanza and the count, he refrained from visiting them during the day.

"He is jealous of me," he said, mentally. "The proud Frenchman fears Lafitte may take a fancy to have so fair a *protegee*. Hatred for him could almost tempt me to detain this lovely flower, did I not love her so truly, and know that her happiness, which I alone seek, is bound up in him. *Dios!* he has a noble presence, withal, and is a cavalier on whom a lady might well bestow her heart. This green-eyed count should rather thank my love for his lady's safety, than show his jealousy. If I loved her not, as I have never loved woman—*Ha!* a footfall! Who goes there? Perhaps a bat only," he said, after listening a moment, as a slight noise, which he thought a footstep at the extremity of the passage, struck his ear. "Well, he shall have her," he continued, hastily, "and God help me! he shall have her from my hand! I will at least have the approval of my conscience for one disinterested act. To-morrow they go."

As he spoke, he swung himself from the terrace to the rigging of his vessel, and descending to the deck, hastened by his presence the preparations for sailing early on the ensuing morning. He then returned to the armory, and for several hours paced to and fro in deep thought. At length he cast himself on the ground and slept. His dreams were of his lovely captive.

CHAPTER XVII.

STRATAGEM.

We will now return to Count D'Oyley. He was in the chamber, where he had been borne the preceding night. He lay motionless upon his pallet, but slept not. Constanza leaned her head upon his arm and slumbered peacefully. Her dreams, like those of innocence and purity, were all of happiness.

"Constanza, my love! awake!" said her lover, gently touching her closed eyes.

He had long been ruminating upon his condition, the character of Lafitte, and the probability that he would be in the same mind in the morning, with regard to their liberation.

The more he reflected, the greater his doubts became; and when he recalled, with a feeling of apprehension and indignation, the language, tone, and manner of the outlaw, in his interview with him in the morning, his confidence in his promises failed, and he at once resolved to make his escape before morning; fearing even to remain through the night, subject to the caprice of his captor.

"Awake, love!" he said, softly, as he came to this determination.

"What, Alphonse, is it you? Are there more trials for me?" and she looked up into his face, her eloquent eyes suffused with tears, and clung to his arm with nervous apprehension.

"But one more, my Constanza! I think we may escape from this place. I dare not trust Captain Lafitte's firmness till the morning."

"Have you fresh cause for suspicion? Tell me! Leave me not in suspense!" and alarmed, she gazed imploringly into his face.

"No, love! but I fear he may change his mind. If we can by any means effect our escape, it will not be prudent to remain till morning."

"You have heard something, dear Alphonse? I know you have, that leads you to take this sudden step. Oh, tell me all!" she added earnestly; "am I not worthy of your confidence?"

"All, all confidence, dearest! Your suspicions are not without foundation. Not long since, when I walked along the passage to breathe the cooler air of the mouth of the cave, I heard the voice of Lafitte, as you tell

me is his habit, in soliloquy. Thinking I might learn something, which in our situation could be improved to advantage, I cautiously approached the gallery, along which he was pacing backward and forward, and heard sufficient to alarm me for your safety and my own and to lead me to place but slight confidence in his promise to take us to Port-au-Prince to-morrow. Will you not second me, then, dearest, in attempting to escape from this place?"

"But can we escape, Alphonse? and why should we fear to trust Lafitte? He is impulsive it is true; but would not, I think, intentionally deceive us. But I will go with you, dearest! I will never be separated from you again! Whom do I love but you, my Alphonse? Oh, let us go! He may indeed, be in another mood in the morning," she added, hastily, as his first interview with her flashed on her mind. "Oh, I fear—fear him, much! I will go with you. Let us hasten!—but how?"

"I saw a felucca at the foot of the rock, as I was brought in prisoner, containing a small mast. It was lying opposite the long passage. If we can gain this boat unperceived, in an hour we shall be beyond pursuit, and, with a light breeze, to-morrow evening, be able to reach Port-au-Prince. Now let us arrange our plan."

"Shall I waken Juana?"

"You had best; she may assist us materially."

The slave, who was asleep in the extremity of the chamber, was roused with no little trouble from her heavy and dreamless sleep, by the count, who was now elated and cheerful, with the prospect of soon being far from the presence and power of one whom he suspected to be his rival, and from whom, consequently, he supposed he had everything to fear.

The old slave listened to their project with attention and pleasure.

"O! Juana! think Massa Doly better wait till morning come; caus' if Massa Lafitte sa' he let lily lady and buckra gemman go free—dey s'go go as Juana 'tan here. But den, if de lily Miss 'fraid, Juana jess go 'long wid her."

"Thank you, Juana," said Constanza, "we find that if escape is possible, we had best leave the cave to-night. In the morning, perhaps, the crew of the vessel might, as they often do, oppose their captain's commands, and we should then be lost."

"Juan' know dat, well 'nough! How 'tink you get out, Massa Doly!—de guard 'tan at de mouf—de schooner down in de basin full of men. It's mighty diflikil' to get 'way, Massa Doly," she said, shaking her head, impressively.

"Listen!" said the count. "We have thought of this plan. You have a husband in the schooner, I am told. Pass the guard, and say you wish to take some articles of clothing to him—he will no doubt permit it—this carpet and these provisions, which you are to place in the boat, shall pass as the clothing. Descend to the vessel—take your opportunity, and drop them into the felucca, or the schooner's boat, if you find it alongside. Talk with the watch and ply him with the spirit I give you. Tell him you wish to return for something, and that Master Theodore may come back with you. Leave the impression, that is, make him believe that you will soon be there with Theodore. Tell the guard the same, and do not forget to ply the bottle freely. Then, if you can find a cap and cloak, belonging to Theodore, bring them with you here, and I will then tell you further our plans. Do you understand what I have said?"

"Iss, Massa Doly; ol' Juana no fool. She know jiss how to do. Leave Juana to herself."

Taking the flask of spirits which had been left by the side of the invalid and muttering:

"Juana know de root put in dis, if Massa Doly want make sleep come," the old African disappeared in the darkness of the passage. In a few moments her footsteps died away, and the lovers, in silence and anxiety, awaited her return.

"Who goes there?" challenged the guard, as the dark form of the old slave emerged from the gloom of the cavern.

"What for you speak so loud and cross, Gil?—nobody but ol' nigger—don't be frighten'."

"Diablo! Juana, you are ugly enough to frighten the devil," he replied with a loud laugh; "what are you crawling about for, this time of night?"

"I want to see my ol' husband—and ear' dese tings to him. You know, Gil, I've been along wid dis purty lily lady, dis more dan week."

"Ah ha, the Castilian!" said Gil, with a smile; "she is pretty, Juana—you two together must very well personate light and darkness. But where is this lady, our wise captain loves so well as to give his own share of booty for her ransom?"

"But what have you in that flask—the pure Jamaica or purer Santa Cruz? This goes to daddy blubber-lip, the steward, I will wager! I must take a sip, to see if it is not too hot for the old boy's stomach. You must be tender of your better-half in his old age, Juana. Ha—pehl pehl! but this is made of the true grape. Hold, good Juana! don't be in haste. Let old Crisp sleep; he would rather rest his venerable

limbs now, than smack his lips over the best quart of aquadiente he ever stole from the captain's quarter-cask."

"Dere, Gil, you hab drink 'nough," she cried, interrupting him and seizing the flask; "now jess hol' dis tight," she continued, walking out on a broad plank extending from the terrace to the cross-trees of the schooner.

Assisted by Gil, she carefully descended the shrouds to the deck, which was strewn with the wearied and sleeping crew.

The watch drowsily leaned against the binnacle, with a half-smoked and fireless cigar in his lips; but he started, when, as she approached him, he discovered her by the light of the lantern, which hung in the companionway.

"Juana, my beauty, is it you? Are you picking the men's pockets of their spare reals? Come here and let me talk with you!"

"Diego, how you do? It long time I seen you. How is my Crisp?"

"Why, just like yourself, Juana; he grows handsomer as they call the change in Congo: that is, blacker, every day."

"Well, I'm glad to know dat—I've come aboard to see him. How long you been on watch, Diego?"

"It is four bells since, and now you've come it's five, my beautiful girl,"—he replied, with mock-gallantry.

"Now jess stop wid dat nonsense, Diego; you're always flattering me—I've got ol' and wrinkly now."

"Yet you've broken many a black lover's heart in your day—when you lived in Louisiana; is it not so, bel' Juana?"

"I can't stop talk now—Diego," she said complacently; "have you been two hours on watch! and no drink not in all time, I dare say."

"You say most truly and sadly, good Juana," he replied; "since Mateo got drunk on watch, and let a barge full of men come aboard of us, there's no more drinking."

"Juana know dat, Diego, well 'nough, and she just bring somefin to keep de dew from soaking to de heart. I don't forget when you nurse my Crisp, when he got he head broke. Dere, Diego—ake two, three swallow, and gib it back to me."

"Miraculo; my queen of clubs," he replied, gayly, "but you are a goddess! Well, this is good! Madre de Dios! where got you such double-distilled nectar! but never mind where it comes from so that we know where it goes to," he added, placing the mouth of the flask to his own and quaffing most generous draughts. "Bah, but you are a jewel, Juana. What's that you cast into the boat?" he added suddenly, and looking over the side.

"Only two, three t'ings belong to Crisp. I don't like go below, and 'sturb dem sleep, dere. You tell him in de mornin', his clothes dere in de boat. Is Massa Theodore 'board?"

"No, it is his next watch too—he'll not be down in time, I fear."

"Neber you fear, Diego, I'll bring him 'long. I'm coming down by and by to bring Crisp he jacket, an I'll wake him, and he'll come wid me. Just gib me one ob his cap and him watch coat."

Diego readily brought them, and said.

"Well, Juana, you are a nice girl—stay, let me take another sip at the flask."

"Good-by, Diego, I must go," she replied, turning to reascend the shrouds.

"Adios, Juana."

The old slave, satisfied that she had given him enough to produce intoxication, after carefully threading her way through the sleeping crew, slowly ascended the rigging.

"Gil, you gone sleep! Fy, Gil! guard go sleep on pos," she said, stepping upon the terrace, approaching and shaking him, as he leaned against the face of the rock.

"Demonics! what, old black witch!" he grumbled, ill-humoredly; "gi—give me my aq—aq—aquadi—diente—te. Diablo! but it is good," he continued, as he took another draught.

"You hab 'nuff; you drunk now, Gil?" she said inquiringly; wishing to ascertain how far her stratagem had taken effect.

Satisfied with the manner in which she had followed her instructions, the slave hastened into the grotto, where the count and Constanza were awaiting her return with apprehension and trembling solicitude.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOPE BRIGHTENS.

SHORTLY after Juana entered the cavern two figures came forth from the cave, passed with a hasty and suspicious tread by the drunken guard, whose pistols they secured, and crossed carefully the plank bridge to the cross-trees of the schooner.

"Now, dearest Constanza, all your energy and presence of mind are necessary. There stands the watch with his head leaning upon the quarter-rail, holding to a stay. He is not wholly intoxicated, but we must pass him as Juana and Theodore; now move lightly and firmly."

As the count spoke he passed his arm round the waist of his lovely companion, and supported her trembling and unpracticed footsteps to the deck.

"Va usted a los infiernos!" muttered one of

the sleepers, as the count's foot pressed heavily upon his hand.

Constanza had the presence of mind not to scream, and the disturbed sleeper turned over upon his hard bed, and grumblingly fell asleep again.

"Who are you, there? Caramba! Is it you, Juana? Por amor de Dios! but that agua de vita of yours, Ju Juana, my beauty, has made the schooner, and the bay, and the land, go round in a merry reel," he said, slowly and thickly articulating—"Fa la ra, la ra la, la! But who is that, Juana?" he said, suddenly stopping in the midst of a drunken pirouette. "Oh, I see! Senor Theodore. Your humble servant; I kiss my hand to you. It is your next watch, Senor Theodore, your watch! Do you take, Senor Theodore? I believe I am drunk, or getting so—but it's all owing to—that beauty there—she fascinated me, master Theodore, she fascinated me. There, Ju Juana, hold up your pretty face, and let me banquet on it. So, give me a small sip more—one sip at that flask—what kills may cure, yo-you knew, Senor Theodore!"

The disguised count handed him the bottle, and while he was diligently engaged in quaffing its contents he handed Constanza over the side of the schooner into the boat and immediately followed himself.

"Ho! wh-where are you go-going, Juana!—oh! I, I see, to get the clothe-clothes. Well, I'll take them up—take them up!"—and, as he made an attempt to reach over the quarter-railing, he lost his equilibrium and staggering backward, fell across the companionway where he lay nearly insensible.

"Now, Constanza, dearest," said the count, "sit perfectly still. Are you alarmed? are you all firmness?"

"Wholly so, Alphonse," she whispered, "I can aid you, if necessary."

"No, no, dearest, brave girl! I shall require only your mental energies."

Severing with a cutlass which he had taken from the deck the painter, or rope securing the boat to the schooner, he cautiously and without noise put off from her. Then seizing an oar, five or six of which, beside a mast with a single sail, lay along the thwarts, he wrapped a portion of the carpet, prepared for the purpose, around it and placed it in the rowlock or cavity fitted for its reception in the stern. Gently, as if plying a glass oar, he then turned the head of the boat and impelled her by sculling across the basin to the entrance of the rock-bound passage communicating with the open sea.

Constanza, with a fluttering pulse, but courageous heart, sat silently by his side. Not a word was spoken, and not a sound was heard around them. Even the motion of the blade of his oar, as it divided the water, was noiseless, and the ripple under the stem scarcely reached her ear.

They had now entered the passage, and, with more boldness and assurance, the count urged forward his little bark. Their bosoms began to swell with hope as the schooner, the mouth of the cave, and the tall cliff gradually faded in the distance; when suddenly, the loud voice of one giving the alarm, as they thought, fell upon their ears with fearful distinctness, curdling the current of life in the bosom of the maiden, while a cold thrill passed over the heart of her lover.

"We are missed," said the count, incited to greater exertion, "but the chances are on our side."

With a seaman's skill he worked the single oar, and urged the boat through the water with increasing velocity.

But a single voice had yet been heard by them, and listening, they recognized the air of a song, which some one—Diego, as they judged from the sound of the voice—was singing in a wild strain.

"It is the drunken watch," he said, as he listened to the voice dying away in the distance; "he has recovered from his momentary stupor, and is now giving vent to his excitement in a Bacchanalian song. Would to heaven he had been as much of the animal as the guard. Be not alarmed, dear Constanza," he continued, stooping to kiss her brow, "there is now no real danger," and he still swayed vigorously to the oar.

"But may not Lafitte, who is so rigid in his exactions of duty, if awakened by this man, inquire the cause and discover us? Heaven forbid! Holy Maria bless and aid us with thy presence!" and she sought her crucifix to press it to her lips, as she lifted her heart in devotion.

"Oh! Alphonse—I have lost my crucifix, my mother's dying gift," she exclaimed, alarmed; "have you seen it?"

"No, dearest, you have probably dropped it."

"It is an augury of evil. Holy Virgin protect me!" and tears filled the eyes of the lovely petitioner, as with locked hands she gazed upward.

"Calm your feelings, sweetest," he said cheerfully, "we shall soon be free. See! they pursue us not. Listen! the voice of the singer is scarcely heard; and look about you! we are just at the mouth of the passage, with the open sea before us, and Port-au-Prince but a few

leagues to leeward. Courage, my brave Constanza," he added, encouragingly. "Now we are out of the pass—I feel the sea breeze already upon my cheek. See how it is playing with your hair."

He raised the mast, and hoisted the lantern sail, which, swelling and distending as it caught the breeze, instantly depressed the boat to one side, and impelled her rapidly through the water. Under the influence of this new agent, it now skipped from wave to wave, dashing their broken crests from her bows.

The count, who had taken his seat by the side of Constanza, now that the boat was urged forward by the wind, congratulated her upon their escape.

She silently pressed his hand, and kept her eyes fixed steadily on the shore.

"Did you see that light?" she said, suddenly clinging to his arm.

The count, who was intent upon his duty of governing the boat, whose head he turned toward the entrance of St. Marc's channel in the direction of Port-au-Prince, where he expected to find his frigate, turned and saw the moon just appearing above the distant cliff, broken into apparent flame by the woods over which it was rising.

"No, no, sweetest, it is the moon; a second augury for good. It smiles upon our departure. See now, as she ascends the skies, how she flings her silvery scarf out upon the waters."

"No, no, not that, it was a flash. Hark! did you hear that?" she exclaimed, as the heavy report of a gun came booming over the sea.

"It is indeed a gun, and fired from the schooner; but be not alarmed, they can hardly reach us."

"Hark! what whizzing, rushing sound is that over our heads?"

"A bird, merely," said the count quietly; and then added to himself: "That shot was well aimed. Courage, my dearest, this beautiful boat was built for sailing. If the wind holds, we shall make Cape St. Marc by sunrise, and then if pursued, which I doubt, we can run for the town; but if not, we will continue on to Port-au-Prince, which is but fifteen leagues further. Ah! there is another flash."

As he spoke, the report of a second gun came sharply from the shore.

"Courage, Constanza! they cannot reach us now. That too was shot," he added. "If they have discovered our escape, they are firing at some object which they think is our boat. It will require time to take them off and put them on the right track. Blow bravely, winds! Are you confident, dearest?" he asked, pressing her to his heart—"there is now no longer cause for fear."

"Yes, now I begin to hope we may yet escape. Heaven, I thank thee!" and she looked devoutly upward, the moonlight falling upon her fair forehead, and adding a richer gloss to her dark hair. In that attitude something fell from her bosom, and rung as it struck the bottom of the boat.

"There is your crucifix, sweet Constanza," he said, bending to pick it up. "What! no, a dagger! What means this?"

"My last hope on earth, if you outlaw had retaken us," she answered, with firmness and emotion.

"God forbid! Constanza—noble-spirited woman!" he exclaimed, embracing her.

Morning found the lovers in sight of the town of St. Marc. At the first moment of dawn the count eagerly searched the horizon for an indication of being pursued, and just as the sun lifted his disk above the inland mountains, his beams fell upon a white spot many leagues to the northward, and on the verge of the sky and sea.

CHAPTER XIX.

DISCOVERY AND PURSUIT.

WE will now return to Lafitte, whom we left lying in troubled sleep on one of the rude benches upon which he had thrown himself in the cave, after having decided, though not without a severe struggle between his passions and desire to act honorably toward his fair captive, to give her and her lover their freedom, and convey them to Port-au-Prince the ensuing morning.

Suddenly his slumbers were disturbed by the cry—"To arms! to arms!"

"A boat is in the passage," shouted his lieutenant—"we may be surprised."

The outlaw, springing to his feet, and shouting to the men who slept about him to arm and follow, hastened to the terrace, where two or three of the buccaneers had already collected.

"Awake the crew of the schooner," he shouted. "Where is the guard? Ho! there! the guard! where is he?" he sternly demanded.

His commands, issued in the cavern, had been followed by a hasty and simultaneous rising of the sleeping crew, who had not heard the alarm given by Theodore. He had left the recess within the cavern where he slept, and gone forth to stand his watch, when the boat of the fugitives in the passage caught his quick eye, and he instantly flew to communicate his discovery to Lafitte.

There was now a bustle of preparation on

board the schooner, when Lafitte ordered the crew to ascend to the platform and defend it. Having lost so many men in the severe fight of the previous night, he did not wish needlessly to expose the lives of his men.

"Up! who is that laggard there?" he demanded, as the form of the guard, lying on the quarter-deck, caught his eye.

"It is Diego, senor—he is dead, or dead drunk," replied one of the men.

"Drunk? Throw him down the hatches, then, and leave him to the knives of the enemy, if there be any."

"Theodore, how do you make that boat?—you said you saw her in the passage?" he inquired, turning quickly to the youth. "I can see nothing."

"Look, sir! there! just beyond the furthest rock—see! she has a sail, which I did not before discover—she must have set it since."

"That boat is not approaching," replied Lafitte, after looking for a moment in the direction indicated by Theodore. "She is outside, and standing to the south. What can it mean?"

"Whoever it is, senor, they seem to have been ashore on mischief!" said one of the crew. "Here is Gil also drunk or dead."

The pirate turned as he spoke, and saw the body of the guard, insensible where he had fallen.

"Ho! a light here. He is warm," he said, placing his hand upon him. "Faugh! he breathes like a distillery. Say you the watch is drunk too?"

"Yes, sir, as dead as the guard," replied the man whom he addressed.

"By the holy cross! I would like to know what this means!" he shouted.

"Diablo! Now, I think, senor," said one of the men; "somebody stepped on my hand while I was asleep, and I afterward dreamed of hearing a boat leave the schooner."

"Fool! dolt! dreaming idiot! there may have been good cause for your dream—you deserve to be swung from the yard-arm," he said, striking the man with the hilt of his cutlass. "But why do I dally?—light a match and depress that piece, Theodore, if you see the boat."

"Yes, senor!" replied the youth, in a voice which had lost its former animation.

He now began to suspect whom the boat contained, having, as the man spoke of his dreams, cast his eye over the terrace, and discovered that the schooner's boat was missing. Obeying the command of his chief, he leveled the gun, but high over the true mark now visible, as the sail of the boat glanced in the rising moon—while his bosom beat with apprehension, lest his good intention should be unsuccessful.

The chief impatiently seized the match and fired the piece, the report of which reverberated among the cliffs, and died away like distant thunder along the caverned shores of the bay.

"A useless shot—they still move on," he exclaimed. "See! the sail glances in the moonlight. Do better than that."

The gun was eagerly depressed and discharged by Lafitte himself, with no better result, and in a few moments the object of their attention and alarm was invisible in the haze and darkness of the sea.

"I would give my right hand to know what this means!" said the pirate, musingly.

"The schooner's boat is gone, sir!" said one of the men, hastily.

"Gone!" he exclaimed, springing to the verge of the terrace. "It is gone, indeed!" he shouted, as a new thought apparently flashed across his mind. "That light here!" and seizing a lamp from one of his men, he rushed into the inner cavern, and entered the chamber recently occupied by his prisoners.

It was silent and deserted. Then dashing the lamp upon the pavement, and muttering within his clinched teeth deep execrations, for several minutes he paced the cavern like a madman. Gradually he became calmer, and spoke:

"They have escaped me, then! She whom I worshiped has doubted my faith. Curse the fates that are ever crossing me! Here I have been humbling my passion and schooling my mind to virtuous resolves, for the happiness of this woman, who despises me. For the bliss of this titled fool, who doubts my word, I have let slip the fairest prize that ever fell into the possession of man. But the charm is broken, and I will win her! There are no terms between him and me. I will pursue him to the death, and she shall yet become the bride of the detested outlaw."

"Ho!" he shouted, without having formed any decisive plan to pursue with regard to the fugitives. "Cast off and make sail on the schooner—spring! we must overhaul that boat. Lively, men! lively!" he added, hastily issuing from the cavern, and energetically repeating his orders for immediately getting under way.

The morning sun lighted the pirate's schooner, many leagues from the point of her departure, crowding all sail, and standing toward the south and east, as the most probable course taken by those of whom Lafitte was in pursuit.

The outlaw was upon the deck which he had not quitted since the schooner left the basin, his eager eye scanning the faint lines of the horizon.

"Do you see nothing yet, Theodore?" he in-

quid of his young *protege*, whom he had sent to see you nothing!"

"No, *senor*, the sun is just lifting the haze from the water; you can see better from the deck."

"Sail ahead!" shouted a man on the fore-castle.

"I see it," cried Theodore, "as the haze rises; it is ahead, and just off St. Marc's town. If it is the boat we seek, it is useless to pursue it, as it has at least two leagues the start of us, and unless we take her out from under the guns of the town, we must give her up."

"If it were from under the guns of the Moro, I would take her out," exclaimed the buccaneer chief. "Set the foretopmast studding-sail; we will yet reach them before they get under the land," he added, bringing his spy-glass to his eye.

"It is the boat!" he exclaimed joyfully, after a moment's scrutiny; "I would know my little gig as far as I could see her. They have hauled their wind and are passing the port, no doubt for Port-au-Prince."

"Now favor me, hell or heaven, and I will yet have my revenge!" he added through his shut teeth; and under additional canvas, the pirate dashed on after the boat of the fugitives.

Theodore descended to the deck after the discovery of the boat, with a thoughtful brow and a gravity unusual to his years and to the individual. He was naturally gay and light-hearted, and a vein of delicacy, high moral sentiments, and an honorable feeling in spite of his education, formed the bases of his character.

Appearing to second Lafitte's anxiety to overtake them, he did all in his power to retard the preparations for the pursuit. During the dark hours of the morning, while he leaned over the quarter-rail, watching with a trembling heart the indistinct horizon, fearing to look lest he should discover the boat, yet by a kind of fascination constantly keeping his eyes wandering over the water, his thoughts were busy in devising means to prevent the recapture of the lovers.

CHAPTER XX.

LAFITTE AND THEODORE.

WHEN morning discovered clearly the object of their pursuit, the cry of the sailor, which made the blood of Lafitte leap with joy, sent that of Theodore back to his heart, chilled with apprehension.

"What means that sad countenance, my young child of the sea?" inquired Lafitte playfully, as, in pacing with an elastic step, fore and aft the quarter-deck, he stopped and lightly tapped the shoulder of the boy, who was leaning thoughtfully against the rigging, gazing upon the glimmering sail of the boat, diminished in the distance to a mere sparkle upon the water.

"Want of sleep has paled you, Theodore. Go below and turn in, and when the watch is next called, you shall once more become fair lady's page. Ha! your blood mounts quickly to your cheek! Nay, never be ashamed to be esquire of dames. It is the best school of gallantry for a spirited youth! Silent, sir page? and pale again?—but I crave your pardon, my boy, I meant not to jest with you," he added, as the youth's emotion, although from a different cause than he imagined, visibly increased.

"You do not jest with me, my more than parent; but there is something weighs heavily upon my spirits. I cannot throw it off!" he replied, in a serious and impressive tone of voice.

"What is it, Theodore? tell me freely. It must indeed be heavy, to chill you thus; you are not wont to give room to sadness without cause. Surrounded as I am by men who fear, but love me not, there is happiness in feeling that there is one whose attachment for me is sincere."

"You have been a greater source of happiness to me, since I first took you from amid the ocean, than words can express. Till then, my heart was like a wild vine running riot upon the dank earth; but you, my child, have caught up at least one tendril, and so trained, nourished, and twined it about your heart, that, unpromising as it may have seemed, it bears at least some fruit of human affection."

"It tells, too, what the whole vine might have become," he continued sadly, "had it not been trampled upon and laid waste by him who should have cherished it, instead of being sought out and nurtured by the hand of parental affection. To all but you I am cast out as a loathsome and poisonous weed; if I did not know that one human breast knew me better, I should be, if you can believe it, a much worse man than I am. It is this little tendril nurtured by you which binds me to my species—which makes me not forget that I am a man."

"There is one other breast that does you equal justice, *senor*?" said the boy, inquiringly, and with some embarrassment, as the outlaw turned away and in silence walked the deck.

"One other! what—whose?"

"There is one, who regards you with the same feelings I do; she—"

"She? Whom mean you? No, you do not mean her!"

"I mean the Castilian."

"Say you so, Theodore?" he said, grasping his arm. "You have been much with her. Do you know her heart?" and he looked steadily and eagerly into his face.

"It is not of her heart I speak, *senor*, but of her expressed opinions."

The pirate's brow changed, but he listened in silence.

"I have heard your name frequently upon her lips, and never as the world uses it. She spoke of you with interest—"

"Ha!"

"The interest she would feel for a brother," he continued, without noticing the interruption. "She inquired of me your character, the tone of your mind, and indeed all I knew of you."

"And how did you speak of me to her?"

"As I can only speak of my benefactor," he said, taking and warmly pressing his hand. "As I and no one else know you."

"Thank you, thank you, Theodore," he said, moved at the generous sincerity of the boy. "And what said she further?"

"She alluded to her capture—to her interview with you; and spoke of and enlarged upon your generous nature; said she could never cease to remember you with kindness, and that, next to the stranger count, you shared a place in her heart."

"Said she so much?" he exclaimed, his eye lighting with hope. "Prosper me, Heaven! and she may yet voluntarily be mine!"

"But the Count D'Oyley, sir!" said Theodore, with emphasis.

Abruptly changing his tone and manner, which was softened by his conversation with his young friend, he exclaimed, almost fiercely:

"And what of him? Has he not outraged me? has he not stolen off, when my plighted word that he should have safe conduct to Port-au-Prince was yet warm upon his ear? What shall bind me to terms of courtesy to him? We gain upon them bravely," he added, eagerly, as he turned in his walk and looked steadily ahead. "I almost fancy I can see the mantilla of the maiden floating in the breeze."

"And what is your purpose with the lady, sir, if we recapture her?" inquired the youth, with firmness and respect.

Lafitte started at this abrupt question, and his face flushed and paled again before he spoke.

"Purpose? purpose? purpose!—sure enough!" he slowly articulated.

"*Senor*, you would not do the sweet lady harm?"

"Harm! what mean you, sir?" he said, turning fiercely upon the boy, and grasping his cutlass-hilt.

"Forgive me, *senor*! but rather than so gentle a creature should come to harm, I would be willing," he continued, mildly and firmly, "to pour out my heart's best blood."

"Do you dare me to my face, Theodore?—do you presume upon my affection, to use such language? Know you that where deep love has been planted, hate takes deeper root. Boy, boy, below!"—and his anger rising with his words, he struck the youth violently upon the breast. He reeled against the mainmast, but recovering himself, with a face in which resentment and wounded feelings struggled forcibly, he silently descended to the cabin.

His captain paced the deck alone for awhile, with agitation in his step and manner, and then hastily followed him.

"Theodore, my son, my brother, forgive me that blow! It was an angry one, and I would atone for it. Oh! if you knew how I have been punished for a blow like that given in a moment of passion in early life, you would forgive and pity me."

The youth rose from the table at which he was seated, with his head leaning upon his hand:

"Forgive you! It is all forgiven. Ungrateful I should be to let this cancel all I owe you, my more than parent. I spoke warmly for the lady, for I feel much for her—so gentle! so lovely! and her whole soul so wrapped up in her lover. Oh! if you could see how their hearts are bound up in one another—how pure and deep their love—how fondly she doats on him; you would—I am sure you would, like me—be willing to sacrifice even your life to make them happy. For my sake," he continued, warmly, "if you regard me—for her sake, if you love her—pursue them no further. Seek not to capture them. Let them go free and be happy, and their prayers will ascend for you; your name will be graven upon their hearts forever in letters of gratitude. What is your purpose, if you take them? It is true, they are almost in your power; but stain not your heart and hand with innocent blood, and far deeper moral guilt. Let there be no more marks of crime upon your brow; for, oh! my generous benefactor, you cannot possess her, even as your wife, without dark and dreadful crime!"

Observing that Lafitte remained silent and moved by his appeal, the noble and youthful advocate for innocence and love continued:

"You love her deeply and intensely. I know

it is an honorable love you cherish. Let her still be free, and such it will always be, and your soul sinless of the crime I fear you meditate. But take her once more captive, and you debase her either as bride or mistress. Your love will turn to disgust; to hatred instead of gratitude, which now reigns there, will fill her breast for the slayer of her lover, the violator, even with the sanction of the Holy Church, of her honor and plighted troth. Nay, sir! please listen to me; it is for your honor, from love to you, my best benefactor, I speak so freely. Do you not remember, just before Constanza left your vessel, I remarked how cheerfully you smiled, and what a calmness dwelt upon your brow, and how consciousness of doing right and governing your own impulses, elevated and ennobled the expression of your features?"

"I do, Theodore."

"And were you not then happy—happier than you had been before—happier than you have been to-day?"

"I was—I was!" he replied, affected.

"Was it not the victory over yourself, and the resolutions which on bended knee you made to the lady, that henceforward your course should be one she would feel proud to trace? Oh, was it not the confidence of rectitude, when you let the maiden go free, and the resolution to win an honorable name, which thus restored peace to your bosom and composure to your brow, and ennobled you with sentiments of self-respect?"

"It was—it was, my Theodore."

"And were you not very happy, and did you not feel better satisfied with yourself than ever in your life before, when your eye dwelt upon the faint speck indicating the fast disappearing vessel containing the being who had called up these holy and honorable feelings?"

"Theodore, I did, my boy!"

"Oh! why then will you throw away this cup of happiness when once more offered to your lips? Why will not my excellent benefactor create for himself again this happiness?" he said, taking the passive hand of his friend and chief and looking up with an entreating smile into his face.

"I will, Theodore, I will; you have conquered!" exclaimed Lafitte, touched by the passionate and affectionate appeal of his ardent young friend; and yielding to his better feelings he said, after a few moments' affecting silence: "Theodore, you have conquered—go to the deck and give what orders you will."

"Yet for Constanza I will live; for her sake," he said mentally, as the happy boy disappeared through the companionway, "I will become an honorable man. Oh, that some good angel would help me to do what I wish to do, but have not the power! Bright spirit of my departed mother," he continued, looking upward calmly and thoughtfully, "if there is a communication between saints and men, give me thy assistance, temper my passions, allure me to virtue, make me to abhor my present mode of existence, and refrain evermore from dyeing my hand in guilt. To thee I offer my broken and subdued spirit. I am in thy hand; take me and mold me as thou wilt!"

"Sail ho!" shouted the lookout from the foretopmast-head. The cry was again repeated by the officer of the deck, at the entrance of the companionway, before the pirate moved from his statue-like attitude.

"Whereaway, Theodore?" he quietly asked, as he slowly ascended to the deck.

"Off the starboard quarter, sir. I have put the schooner about!" he said inquiringly to his captain, looking with sympathy into his pale face.

"It is well, Theodore."

"The stranger, sir, is in a line with the boat. If he should be one of our cruisers—"

"True, boy, true; we must watch over their safety. Alter her course again; we must see that they come to no harm."

In a few minutes the schooner was once more under sail, standing for the boat, which was now about five miles ahead.

"What do you make her out?" he hailed to the man aloft.

"I can't see her very distinctly now, sir; she is almost in the sun's wake. There! now I make her out—a large vessel, and very square-rigged. I think she must be a man-of-war. I can't make her hull yet; she's down to her fore-yard under the horizon."

"We must take care, and not run into the lion's den," said Lafitte; "there is a stir, I see, among the craft in the Bay of St. Marc, as if they suspected the wolf was abroad. Stir up the crew, Ricardo."

"Ay, ay, sir. Forward there all! Be ready to tack ship," shouted Ricardo. "To your posts, men."

A momentary bustle ensued, and, dispersed in different parts of the vessel, the crew stood silently awaiting the next command of their officer.

The stranger gradually rose above the horizon and showed the majestic proportions of a large frigate, standing close-hauled on the wind out of St. Marc's channel. The boat containing the lovers was now within a mile of the ship-of-war.

"That is the French frigate, *senor*, that passed us the night we came out of the *Pan de Azúar*," said Ricardo. "See, she has the French ensign flying at her peak."

"That must then be the *Comte D'Oyley's* frigate," said Lafitte. "So we shall, in our turn, have to play the fugitive."

"No, *senor*," said Theodore, "he will not pursue us; but were it not as well to put about? See, the boat steers for her."

After watching with his glass for a long time and with much interest, Lafitte saw her run alongside of the strange ship, which lay to, and took the lovers on board.

He then laid down the spyglass and giving in a calm and measured tone his orders to put about and stand for *Barrataria*, with a melancholy expression upon his fine features, he descended into his state-room, leaving the command of the vessel for the remainder of the day to his lieutenant.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CHIEF OF BARRATARIA.

THE scene is now changed to that portion of Louisiana described in the historical sketch of the *Barratarians* in the preceding pages.

On the seventh morning after the events related in the foregoing chapter, the fleet over which Lafitte held command, consisting of thirteen vessels, composed principally of brigantines, polaccas, small schooners of that peculiar class known then and now as the "*Baltimore Clipper*," two or three gunboats and feluccas, besides many small boats with and without masts, was anchored in the harbor behind the island and under cover of the guns of the stronghold of the smugglers, crowning the western extremity of the island of *Grand Terre*.

On the south side of the island upon a gentle eminence commanding a southern prospect of the Gulf, while over the intercepting trees was an uninterrupted and distant view of the masts of the anchored fleet, was congregated in various natural attitudes, a group, apparently deeply engaged in watching the movements of two vessels standing toward the island.

The shape and number of the sails of the approaching objects engrossing the attention of the observers, indicated vessels of small and equal burden, apparently sailing side by side, and steering with all their canvas spread, for the western pass.

As they lessened their distance from the island, and their low hulls rose above the sphericity of the sea, the interest of the spectators became more intense. Suddenly a little triangular flag was run up to the peak of one of the vessels nearest the entrance to the lake, and at the same instant a light cloud of smoke shot suddenly from the side of the more distant vessel. This was followed by the sharp report of a shotted gun.

The knoll upon which this party was assembled, was a grassy swell, dotted here and there by a magnificent live-oak, and terminating abruptly several feet above the sea in a perpendicular precipice of earth, formed by the action of the waves, combined with the heavy rains characteristic of that climate, upon the loose and impalpable soil of this alluvial region. Under a venerable tree, growing near the precipice, and hanging partly over it, casting a shadow upon the beach beneath, lay buried in deep sleep, like one who had kept deep vigils the preceding night, the athletic form of the chief of the buccaneers, whose dress and appearance we will employ the time occupied by the vessels in gaining the island to describe.

With a cheek browned by Southern suns, his manly features gave no indication of that age which a silvery hair, sprinkled here and there among his raven locks, betrayed. An ample roquelaure lay outspread by the foot of the tree, serving him both for a couch, and protection from the dampness of the morning, which the sun was rapidly dissipating. One arm, grasping a richly-inlaid belt-pistol in its conscious fingers, was bent under his head, constituting the sleeper's only pillow; the other was buried in his bosom. The blue collar of his seaman's shirt was turned back from his throat and neck, exposing them to the refreshing breeze of the sea, and displaying a depth and strength of chest, as uncommon in this day of physical degeneracy, as it was the birthright of the men of a sterner age.

Encircling his waist was a gorgeous belt of wampum—the gift of a Mexican chief. In it glistened the handle of a dirk, and the curled heads of a brace of serviceable pistols. A black velvet jacket, a slouched sombrero, and a pair of full, long pantaloons, ornamented with bell-buttons, pendent from the eye by chains, and ringing with a clear tinkling sound at every tread of the wearer, with the low, and wrinkled boots of that period, completed the dress, and with the addition of a sheathed saber, mounted with costly jewels, lying by his side and within reach of his disengaged hand, also the arms of the sleeper.

At his feet, and comfortably stretched upon the cloak of his master, apparently dozing, but with eyes of watchfulness and intelligence that took note of every surrounding circumstance, lay a noble dog, of that dignified and sagacious

species, originally derived from the island of Newfoundland. Scarcely, however, and with strong struggles of self-denial, did the faithful animal, with philosophy worthy of a Stoic, resist repeated temptations to quit his post, from time to time presented him in the shape of certain comestibles, by a third individual in the party.

"Dat dog Leon, love stretch de lazy bone on massa cloak, more dan eat. Here you woolly nigger, Leon, come get dis nice turkey wing for your breakfuss."

Leon occasionally raised his eyes, and looked wistfully upon the tempting morsel, then casting them upon his master, reprovingly and negatively shook his head.

Upon a rude hearth, not far from the sleeper, burned a bright fire, over which, suspended upon a crane resting upon upright crotches, hung a large iron pot, which, with certain culinary instruments and preparations around, gave sign of an intention to break, by a substantial meal, the fast of the night.

Into this vessel, Cudjoe, as he progressed in dissecting a wild turkey, tossed the severed portions, with which, however, before consigning them to the boiling receptacle, he would provokingly tempt his fellow-servant, the philosophical Leon, from his duty.

Cudjoe, this mischievous leader into temptation, whom we have before passingly introduced to the reader, was a young slave about four feet high, with a glossy black skin, and glittering white teeth, two of which flanking his capacious jaws, projected outward with the dignity of the embryo tusks of a young elephant. His lips were of ample dimensions, and of the brightest vermillion, the lower one hanging down, and resting familiarly upon his chin, which was short and retreating. The nose, which surmounted these formidable appendages to his mouth, was of vast dimensions, terminating in a magnificent expansion of the nostril, and threatened to encroach upon the province of his ears, which hung down in enormous lapels, as if welcoming the expected proximity.

His eyes were small, restless, and almost deficient in that generous display of white, characteristic of his race. One of these organs, he kept at all times hermetically sealed, while the other enjoyed that obliquity of vision, which renders it difficult for the beholder to decide certainly as to the particular point their owner may be directing his visual orb.

His neck was short and thick, set into his broad shoulders, from which his long arms hung down like those of the orang-outang, terminating in short stunted fingers, of which useful appendages two and a half were wanting. His feet were broad and flat, of equal longitude either way from the base of his short legs, which were placed exactly in their center; so that he seemed to enjoy the enviable facility of progressing in opposite directions, without the trouble of turning his body.

His voice, or rather his voices, for nature charitably had bestowed two upon him, in ordinary conversation was sharp and wiry, and pitched upon a shrill, discordant key; but when he sung, as he often did, the soft airs of his tribe, for the amusement of his master, the melody of a siren seemed floating around the enraptured listener.

His natural disposition was gentle and affectionate; but when roused to revenge, he was more terrible than the uncaged hyena. Gratitude to his master, who captured him from a slaver, and subsequently saved him from an imminent and revolting death, had bound him to him, with a faithfulness and attachment nothing could diminish, and death only terminate; while the shrewdness, activity, and animal courage of the young and deformed African, rendered him a useful and necessary *attaché* to the person of his master.

The fourth and last figure in the group was a superannuated and decrepit old man, with a noble yet attenuated profile. He was doubled through age and infirmity, with a sunken and watery eye, haggard features, long neglected gray beard, and a few straggling silver hairs blowing about his aged temples. He was clothed in coarse and squalid garments, which he confined to his form with one hand, while the other sustained a bundle of dry fuel that he had just gathered on the skirts of the forest. From time to time, he would add a stick to the fire, and kneeling down, blow feebly the expiring flames, at intervals muttering indistinctly, with that unconscious manner characteristic of second childhood.

But the aged menial was not only afflicted with imbecile dotage, but the rays of intellect were faint and flickering in his shattered brain. The light of mind was extinguished in mental night.

Not far from the scene of the aged man's occupation, and within earshot of the sleeper, four or five dark-looking men, in the usual garb of buccaneers reclined upon the sward, smoking and watching in silence the approaching vessels.

To the right of the knoll occupied by these groups, at the distance of half a mile rose the stronghold of the buccaneers. In the rear, and hidden from a prospect of the sea, interspersed

among the trees and surrounding the fort, were several rude huts constructed for the habitations of those of the band, not immediately engaged in the duty of defending the battery.

By these individuals, the objects which had attracted the attention of Cudjoe, the old man, and the group of smokers, had not yet been discovered.

The two vessels now stood in close-hauled, with starboard tacks aboard. The one to the leeward, however, seemed to gain rapidly upon that to windward, which hoisted a broad English ensign, while a parti-colored signal fluttered from her main-peak.

"By St. Jone, but dat is one English cruiser!" exclaimed Cudjoe, as the colors were spread to the breeze, "and dat be one o' our own craf' he chasin'."

One vessel was now evidently in pursuit of the others. The pursuer was a large-sized English armed brig, while the chase was a brigantine, light-armed, but a very fast sailer, and every moment increasing the distance between herself and pursuer. Still she displayed no colors, when the brig fired a gun ahead, to compel her to show them.

The chase replied by running up the Carthaginian flag, and firing a broadside.

The sleeper started at the sound of the signal gun, and with his saber in his grasp, stood upon his feet—a tall, finely formed, and manly figure. His dark hair curled around his expansive forehead; and beneath his arched brows glowed eyes of the deepest black, sparkling like coals of fire as he glanced seaward at the approaching vessels. As the English colors of the armed brig caught his eye, his lip curled with a cold expression of contempt; but as he gazed more steadily upon the vessels, a proud smile lighted up his sun-browned features.

"Here comes a timber of old England's wooden walls, banging away at the *Lady of the Gulf*, as if she had nothing better to do than to scale her guns at my vessels."

"Hal that tells well, my good lieutenant!" and his eye lighted with pleasure as he saw the head of the Englishman's bowsprit and jib-boom, shot away by the gallant broadside of the chase, fall into the water.

The buccaneer was now too far to leeward, to reach the pass without tacking; and before he could execute this nautical maneuver, the English brig ranged upon his larboard quarter.

"Well, Monsieur Johnny," continued the pirate, quietly watching the movement of the vessels, "if you fire your starboard broadside into my little clipper, we may turn the brigantine over to Cudjoe, here, for a riddling sieve."

"Hal she has grounded, and the Englishman has saved his powder!" Instead of firing her broadside into the brigantine, as her maneuvering threatened, the English brig, leaving the chase, ran boldly in, and came to an anchor close under the island, about half a mile from the cliff upon which stood the group, who had, with various degrees of interest, watched the nautical movements we have briefly described.

"By the holy cross! but Sir Englishman shows consummate impudence, firing his spare shot into one of my vessels, and then dropping his anchor in the face of my battery, as if he had done me good service. His coolness shall be warmed a little with red iron bullets, if my battery has not forgotten how to speak."

"Here, Cudjoe, go as if the devil sent you, and tell Getzendanner I want to see him."

"An' who but de debble do sen me?" chuckled Cudjoe, but very wisely to himself, as he went off, marvelously aiding his progress up the slight ascent to the fort with his long arms, which he alternately applied to the ground with great dexterity and effect.

"Hal he launches his pinnace! and it is prettily manned withal. And there flutters a flag of truce!" exclaimed the pirate, as he saw these indications of pacific intentions on the part of the brig.

"Blessed visit of peace! sending out round shot as its pioneers. Ho! my men!" he shouted. His boat's crew springing from their recumbent attitude upon the grass, were upon their feet, and in an instant at his side.

"To the boat! Let us reconnoiter this mysterious stranger, who thus saucily beards us to our very faces," he commanded, seizing his weapons, and hastily buckling his saber around him. Then placing his pistols in his belt, he descended the cliff, followed by his oarsmen, and the next moment stood upon the beach.

CHAPTER XXII.

A STRANGE INTERVIEW.

THE seamen placed their shoulders to the bows of the boat and shoved her off, while their leader, taking from one of his men a coarse seaman's jacket and tarpaulin, put them on, at once and effectually covering his richer dress, and concealing any indications of rank above those around him. Then stepping on board, he seated himself in the stern-sheets and took the helm.

"Let fall! Give way, men!" he cried, in a low, yet energetic tone of command; and the light boat shot away from the beach like an arrow.

In a few moments he approached within hail

of the stranger's pinnace which, with steady pull, was making for the shore.

"Boat ahoy!" hailed an officer in the full uniform of a British naval captain, who stood near the stern of the boat leaning upon his sword, while another officer of the navy, and a gentleman in the military dress of a commander of infantry, were seated under a canopy in the stern-sheets.

"Ahoy!" and the manly voice of the disguised rover rung full and clear over the waters, as he replied.

"Where is your captain?" inquired the Englishman, as the boats came close to each other.

The outlaw, preferring from motives of policy to conceal his real character, replied:

"If you mean the Barratarian chief, you will find him on shore."

"Are you of his band?"

"We can communicate any message to him," he answered, evasively.

"I am the bearer of a packet to Captain Lafitte," replied the officer; "I would know to whom I intrust it."

"We are of Captain Lafitte's party and will execute any commission with which we may be intrusted, be its import peaceful or hostile," said Lafitte firmly.

"What say you, Williams, shall this business be intrusted to this stranger?"

"It is perhaps the only alternative," he replied, cautiously; "he is, most likely, one of the outlaw's band, and will no doubt convey the packet safely to his chief."

"Ho! Monsieur, will you convey this packet to Captain Lafitte, and say to him that we will here await his reply?" demanded the English officer, proffering him, as he spoke, a large packet heavy with seals.

"I will, gentlemen; but had you not better see Captain Lafitte yourselves? If you will pull in to the shore with me, I will notify him of your desire of seeking an interview with him."

After a few moments' hesitation the officer complied, and the two boats were soon observed approaching the island, by the buccaneers on the beach. Alarmed by the firing, they had assembled on the shore in great numbers, armed and prepared for conflict, where they had watched the movements of the boats with no little interest.

When the pinnace came within reach of the guns of the battery on the shore, and within hail of the beach, where nearly two hundred men had collected, the disguised buccaneer, desirous of detaining the officers until he learned the contents of the package, stood up in the boat, threw aside the seaman's jacket in which he was enveloped, and turning to the British officers, said calmly, but in a determined tone:

"Gentlemen, I am Lafitte, and you are my prisoners!"

The astonished officers half drew their swords, and grasped the handles of their pistols.

"Draw no weapons, gentlemen! you are, you see, in my power. I shall detain you but a few hours."

"Base traitor! Well is it said that you honor no flag but your own blood-stained ensign, if thus you recognize a flag of truce. The devil himself would respect that emblem of peace and honorable confidence!" shouted the Briton fiercely.

"Nay, Sir Officer; do you send messages of peace from the cannon's mouth?—Do you bear a flag of truce in one hand and a lighted match in the other? Peace, sir! it is you who tarnish the flag you accuse me of dishonoring!"

The boats had now reached the shore, and Lafitte springing out upon the beach, said:

"Gentlemen, I will detain your arms a few hours. Jacques, hold these men," he continued, pointing to the crew of the pinnace, "under safe guard until further orders. Stand back! back—men!" he called loudly to his followers. "Why do you crowd thus, with lowering brows and hand on weapon, around my prisoners?"

"Spies! spies! Muerto a los Ingleses! Down with British!—Seize them—hang them!" cried the multitude, who rushed forward with lifted weapons as if determined to seize them in spite of the stern discipline which usually controlled their fierce natures.

"Men, do you press me?" he shouted, as they still closed around the Englishmen. "Back, hounds!" and he drew a pistol from his belt.

The most forward of the men at that moment laid his hand upon the arm of one of the officers, who stood between the buccaneer chief and the bow of the boat from which they had just stepped. The report of the pistol rung in the air, and the daring mutineer fell a corpse at the feet of the Englishman.

The crowd fell suddenly back, as they witnessed this summary act of piratical justice.

"Away with this mutinous slave!" he exclaimed; and his followers near him, raised the corpse in silence, and moved away to bury it in a grave hastily scooped in the sand beneath the cliff.

"There is nothing like blood to cool blood!" he said, quietly turning to his prisoners. "Now, messieurs, let this severe but necessary act of discipline, assure you of my desire to secure your personal safety."

"You, my brave fellows, are but tools of subtler men," he said, turning to the crew of the pinnace, who sat moodily and in silence in their boat, expecting to be sacrificed to the violent passions of the lawless men, who, although awed into temporary submission, might, on the first opportunity, satiate their appetite for blood upon their defenseless persons.

"Shove off your boat!"

The British coxswain looked at his officer for instructions.

"Put off, Carroll," he replied, "but watch any signal from the shore."

Under the combined efforts of several of his own crew, the boat shot out from the beach, the men stooped to their oars, and in a short time were alongside of their brig.

In the meanwhile the Barratarian conducted the English officers to his fortress. As they passed along, dark eyes glowered on them from beneath the lowering brows of men familiar with crime—pursued until it had become a passion—whose hands mechanically rested upon the butt of a pistol, or the handle of a dirk or Spanish knife.

The fortlet into which the chief ushered his prisoners crowned a slight eminence of the island overlooking the sea to the south, and the lake or bay of Barrataria to the north, whose distant shore was marked by a level line of cypress trees.

The quarters, or camp, as it was more frequently termed, of the outlaw consisted of a brick edifice within the fort, constructed like the old Spanish houses still to be seen in the more ancient portions of the chief maritime port of Louisiana. The entrance to the fort consisted of a low, massive gateway, before which paced a sentinel in the dress of a seaman, with a drawn saber in his hand and a brace of heavy pistols stuck in his belt. On either side of this gateway was a row of barricaded windows, admitting light into several small apartments, used as store, sleeping and guard-rooms.

"Weston, close the gate, and add three men to every guard! On your life admit no one without my orders!" said Lafitte, as he passed into the fort.

The sailor whom he thus addressed lifted his hat and moved to obey the order, while his captain, with his three prisoners, passed through the gateway into a rude court, around which were ranged several low buildings, serving as work-shops, store-house and quarters for the men who remained on shore. Several pieces of dismantled cannon were lying about the court, and a long gun, turning on a pivot, commanded the whole of the interior of the defenses. It was made use of in quelling domestic disturbances, and stood in front of the buildings just mentioned as the quarters of the chief. To this dwelling, after crossing the court, he conducted his involuntary guests.

"Theodore!" he called, stopping at the entrance; and the youth came forth from a room communicating with the passage running through the building, with a pen in his hand, as if the voice of Lafitte had interrupted him while employed in writing.

"Theodore, lead these gentlemen into the opposite building, and tell Weston to place a guard at the door."

"Gentlemen," he added, with courtesy, turning to the officers, "I regret the necessity of placing you under temporary restraint, but the fierce humor of my men requires it. They unfortunately suspect you visit our island under feigned pretenses, while your real object is to examine the coast, for the purpose of making a descent;" and he looked at them severally and fixedly as he spoke, as if he also harbored the same suspicion.

"You will excuse me," he said abruptly, after a moment's pause, "while I examine the package of which you are the bearer!"

"Cudjoe, see that the gentlemen are comfortable in their room, and have refreshments placed before them."

The officers politely bowed to their captor, who returned their courtesy with dignity, and following their youthful guide, entered the room assigned them for their prison.

In a few minutes Theodore reappeared in the court, closed behind him a heavy door, turning its massive bolt in the lock, and returned to the quarters of the chief, where he found him examining the contents of the package.

Suddenly, starting up, Lafitte cried:

"Theodore, guide Captain Lockyer hither. What turmoil is that without?" he added, with a raised voice, as loud words reached his ears. "Send Weston here!"

"Weston," he said, rapidly, as the captain of the guard appeared at the door, "run the long-gun out of the port-hole in the gate, and bring it to bear upon the blustering fools, and wait my further orders. See that it is well charged with grape."

"Ay, ay, sir!" said the guard, who had recently been promoted from the command of a palacca to the defense of the fort. The creaking of the gun-carriage, as it swung around to the appointed position, had scarcely ceased, when a heavy footstep was heard in the hall,

and the bearer of the packet entered the quarters of the pirate.

"Be seated, sir," said Lafitte, waving his hand to a chair, which the officer occupied. "I have considered the propositions contained in these documents before me, and feel honored in the confidence reposed in me by your Government. But the subject of which they treat is of too great moment for hasty decision. I shall require a few days' delay before I can return a final answer."

"Captain Lafitte," replied the officer, "without commenting upon the circumstances which make me your prisoner, and which I am happy to acknowledge it is not in your power wholly to control, I will proceed by communicating my private instructions, to second the arguments made use of by my superior officer, with which those papers before you have made you acquainted, for the purpose of inducing you to become an ally of England, in this her present contest with the North American States. I am instructed to offer you a commission in his Britannic Majesty's service, with full pardon and admittance into the navy, with ranks equivalent to what they now hold, of all under your command, if you will throw the weight of your power and influence into the scale in our favor."

"These are tempting and honorable proposals, monsieur, and as honorable to the gentlemen who make them as flattering to the subject of them!" replied the outlaw, in a tone between irony and sincerity; "but do I understand you, that I and my officers retain command of our own vessels, provided that we substitute St. George's cross for the flag under which we now sail?"

"Such were not my instructions, Monsieur Lafitte. It is expected that the armed vessels composing your Barratarian fleet will be placed at the disposal of the officers of his majesty, in the contemplated descent upon the coast."

"These are conditions with which I am not, at present, prepared to comply," answered the chief. "They are—"

"But consider the advantages which will result, sir, both to yourself, and the numbers you command," interrupted the officer: "You will be restored to the pale of society, bearing an honorable rank (pardon me, Captain Lafitte) among honorable men. The rank of captain shall be yours, if you co-operate with us, and moreover, the sum of six thousand pounds sterling shall be paid into your hands, whenever you signify your acceptance of the terms proposed. I beg of you, sir, do not permit this opportunity of acquiring fortune and honor to yourself, and glory and success to the arms of England, who is ready to welcome you as one of her bravest sons, escape you."

"Sir," replied the Barratarian, "your offers are extensive; too much so for an outlaw—a banned and hunted man. Ambition will not allure me to accept them; for have I not power, fame and wealth as I am? Is the reward of ambition greater? What will it gain me besides? Honor? possession of an honorable name? Alas! that I have not. That, indeed, were a spur to drive me to your purpose. But will men confer honor upon dishonor? Will a pardon, a title, or a station make men think better of me? Shall I not, in all eyes, still be Lafitte? the branded, despised, feared and cursed of men? No—no—no! Yet," he added, as the image of Constanza passed across his mind, "I will think of it, Captain Lockyer; I will reflect upon your proposals. I wish to become a better and a happier man. Fate, not principle, has made me what I am!"

"I will consider this matter, sir," he added, coolly, casting his eyes upon the paper which lay before him with a manner that implied his desire to terminate the interview.

The officer, however, still lingered.

"I should think, sir," he urged, "that little or no reflection would be necessary respecting proposals that obviously preclude any kind of hesitation. You are at heart, if not by birth, a Frenchman, Captain Lafitte, and therefore in the existing peace between our respective nations, a friend to England. You are outlawed by the Government of the United States; your name is held up to infamy, and a price is set upon your head by the executive of Louisiana."

"What have you, sir, to bind you to America? The tie which alone binds the slave to the galley. The ties that bind you to England are many and may be increased a thousand-fold. Promotion is before you, among the gallant gentlemen of her navy—"

"Gentlemen!" interrupted Lafitte, sarcastically, "ay, gentlemen. What lethe can make the outlaw the gentleman? Sir, I may become a British officer—daring, brave, and gallant, may be—but, shall I be recognized as a gentleman?"

"No, no!" he added, after a pause, and with bitter emphasis, "I must still be Lafitte—the pirate!"

"Nay, monsieur! nay, monsieur!" said the Englishman, touched by Lafitte's manner, "but allow me to suggest that with your knowledge of the coast and its narrow passes, your services will be of infinite value to the success of our arms against Southern Louisiana. An army is now waiting in Canada to unite with the forces

here, and it remains with you to promote the success of this step. It is on your skill, sagacity, and knowledge we rely to bring about this important object."

"Truly, monsieur, these are lofty schemes, well and deeply planned. 'Such inducements as you have offered to an honorable career must not, nor will they, be disregarded. I must, however, deliberate before taking so important a step as that proposed by Colonel Nichols, your superior. Good-morning, sir."

"Theodore, conduct Captain Lockyer to the guard-room."

CHAPTER XXIII. THE MUTINEERS.

LAFITTE paced his room with a firm tread, after Captain Lockyer left him, his brow contracted with thought and indignation, while the white line of his even teeth glittered from between his curled and contracted lips, upon which dwelt a sarcastic smile, expressive of the bitterest scorn.

"Poor fools! they extend the right hand of Lafitte, with 'come and help us, good Sir Pirate!'" he said, dashing the papers from him, and rising from his chair, as the door closed upon his departing prisoner. "Cunning diplomatists as they are, they shall find me the cunninger! They seek my aid, and have come to ask it with red hands, bathed in the blood of my men. They carry aloft the flag of truce, as if a lady's white kerchief would cover their treachery. This Englishman thinks I have little cause to love my countrymen! Thinks he I have better cause to love England? Has she not hunted me down, worried and torn me? Pressed, imprisoned, or hung without ceremony, the bravest of my men? sunk my vessels, and chased my cruisers from the sea with overgrown frigates? Verily! I have much cause to love her!"

"But, massa! 'Merica do worse nor dat; she take, she kill, she burn de craf'; she do more ob de mischief dan Massa English. She say she block you up in de bay, and play de debble wid de camp on de island, and send for to do it, dat brave Cap'un Pattysen; hie, if he come, he knock de ol' camp to pieces, or Cudjoe no nigger—che! che! che!"

Cudjoe seldom restrained his thoughts in the presence of his master, who allowed him such license, not only because experience taught him that he might as well stop his breath as his tongue, but he had often profited by the shrewd observations, to which from time to time, his slave gave utterance, winding up every speech with a low chuckle, expressive of satisfaction.

Lafitte paused a moment in his walk to and fro in his little chamber, as his reflections were thus interrupted.

"You say well, Cudjoe! My countrymen have given me little cause to love them neither. But, then," he continued, relapsing into his former thoughtful walk, "America is my country, and cursed be the hand that betrays either the home of his adoption or of his birth! She is my country, and I love her! No, proud Englishman!" he added firmly, "you shall learn that there is not only honor among outlaws, but pure and disinterested patriotism; and England shall learn, that the pirate Lafitte is too honorable to submit to propositions which she had not honor enough to withhold. Ho, slave!" he called sternly, as he concluded.

"Hasten and tell Captain Getzendanner I desire to speak with him."

Captain Getzendanner at once sought the quarters of his chief, and entering the door of the passage leading to the room, he heard the heavy and measured tread of its occupant pacing the floor, as his habit was, when his thoughts were busy, and matters of deep and exciting interest occupied his mind.

"De lion is lashing his sides mit his tail," said he. "Captain Jacop Getzendanner, look to your discretions."

"Come in," answered a low, stern voice, as he tapped, hesitatingly, at the door with the point of his sheathed saber. The visitor entered, and at a nod from his master, Cudjoe handed him a chair.

"Captain Getzendanner, I have sent to consult with you on matters of importance. You love the British, Getzendanner?" and he looked fixedly into the face of his officer, his searching eyes not suffering a shade of expression to escape detection and mental analysis.

"T'ousand tyvels! Captain Lafitte," replied the Dutchman, warmly, striking his clinched fist upon his knee. "Do I love de murderer of my proder? did dey not press him into der navy? and vas he not kill in de pattlesh? I love de hangman petter, vat ish one tay to tie mine veasand round about mit de bemp!"

"Well, I thought as much," replied Lafitte, "and knew you would rather swing to the yard-arm, than do an Englishman's service. Here are papers, but you do not read?"

"I vas read Tenche, ven I vas a leetle pit poy; put de smooth English lettersh, pe nitout handles, and I never could keep dem from slipping out of mine memorysb, and now tyvel a one is left behind put R—to pe shure," said he, half-seriously, half-humorously.

"And that you remember, from its resem-

blance to a gallows, hal' worthy Getzendanner? But a truce to this trifling. Here, in these papers," and he struck emphatically the documents he held in his hand, "are proposals from the Hon. W. H. Percy, for so says the indorsement," and his lip curled ironically as he continued, "captain of his Britannic majesty's sloop-of-war Hermes, and admiral of the naval forces in these seas, and also from Lieutenant-Colonel Edward Nichols, commander of his majesty's military forces on the coast of Florida, to me—simple Captain Lafitte."

He then briefly stated the nature and extent of the proposition to his astonished lieutenant.

"Now, Getzendanner, I know well, that love nor fear would influence you to obey either me or Satan; but from hatred to the English, I can depend upon your co-operation; therefore I trust you; but betray me, and you know the penalty. Here, in this paper, you have my written instructions, which if you cannot read, Theodore, who is always in my confidence, will explain to you."

Theodore, who had been thoughtfully leaning out of the window, which overlooked the sea, at this moment suddenly interrupted him.

"There is a signal flying on board the Lady of the Gulf, for your presence on board, sir."

"Hal! it is so, indeed!" he exclaimed, going to the window. "What can Belluche want? Why not send a boat? Order my barge, Theodore. Getzendanner, I must aboard; during my absence observe the strictest vigilance in the camp, and on your life, see that those Englishmen escape not; and that the excited men do not seize and sacrifice them to their suspicions. On my return, I will talk with those mutinous fiends, and you must aid me in giving a right direction to their roused feelings. Hol there, are you ready?" he shouted from the window.

"Ay, ay, sir," came from the beach. Leaving his quarters Lafitte was confronted by a large crowd of his men, their faces excited and angry.

"What means this turmoil, my men?" he said, in a conciliatory tone, as he stepped upon the gunwale; "have you not confidence in me? These men are not spies. They seek restitution of the London brigs taken by you before my return from my late cruise in the West Indies; and shall they not have it, if they state their terms in ready gold?" he said, chiming in with their humor.

"Ay, give them their vessels if they give us their gold," cried several voices.

"Very easy said, my masters," growled an old weather-beaten smuggler, near Lafitte, "but who is to handle the chink when it's got?" and he cast his eyes moodily and suspiciously at his commander.

"Down with old Fritz," said two or three who heard him; "our captain is all honor; we never had cause to grumble at shares."

"Rest easy, my men," continued Lafitte, in the same tone; "you shall have all things explained and understood when I return from the schooner. If there is a man who mistrusts Lafitte, or doubts his word, let him step forward."

No one moved, and the next moment every hat was in the air.

"Give way," he cried to his young coxswain.

Amid the cries of "Long live Lafitte—viva Lafitte!" which rose long and loud from the fickle and tumultuous assembly upon the shore, the boat put off from the land; and obedient to the order of Lafitte, pulled directly for the vessel, whose signal was flying for his presence on board.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SECRET EXPEDITION.

THE business of Lafitte on board the Lady of the Gulf, relating to the private disposition of some specie, which, unknown to his crew, the captain had smuggled into his state-room, having no immediate connexion with our story, we shall leave him to transact without our supervision, and return to the prisoners confined in the guard-room of the fort.

"Well, Williams, we are in a fine pickle, cooped up in this seven-by-nine bit of a box, at the tender mercies of Lafitte and his merciful crew," said the naval officer, rising from the rude bench on which he had been some time seated in silence, and looking forth from the grated window.

"Such a swarm of gallows-looking cut-throats as were assembled on the shore to honor our debarkation I never saw before. They need neither change of place nor body, to be fiends incarnate."

"You say true, Lockyer," replied the military officer addressed; "such black-browed villains would shame the choicest corps of Beelzebub's infantry. I have no doubt he would set up a rendezvous on this blessed island of Grand Terre, Barrata, or whatever else it is called, if he did not apprehend his new recruits would corrupt his old soldiers."

"But then," replied the naval officer, "their chief seems to be a man of other metal. I could hardly believe I was looking upon the celebrated Lafitte, when I gazed upon a noble

person and fine features, in which, in spite of their resolute expression, there is such an air of frankness, that I am surprised he ever could be guilty of a mean action, and be familiar with lawless deeds of blood and battle. I have seldom seen a finer countenance or a nobler presence, than that of this same buccaner. 'I will wager my epaulets against a middie's warrant, he has broken more hearts than heads.'

"What think you," he continued, turning to the other naval officer by his side, "can we trust Lafitte in this matter? He seems to care for our welfare, nor would he have sent that fierce Spaniard, who laid his hand on my arm, to breakfast with his infernal highness this morning, if he had determined to sacrifice us. He might have suffered our massacre, without being charged with foul play. We are in his power safe enough! What fatal temerity could have induced us to let him inveigle us within reach of his guns? For such a blind piece of folly, if it does not end better than I foresee, I will throw up my commission, and run a lugger between Havana and Matanzas, with a young savage before the mast, and a bull headed Congo for officers and crew. Curse me," he added, with much chagrin, "but, Captain Lockyer, you have run your craft hard aground; if you get clear this time, you man thank any thing but your own wits."

"Hark! there's a gun—another—a volley!" exclaimed the military officer.

"Good God! can these infernal fiends be attacking the Sophia?" cried Lockyer; ho, there, guard! what, ho! What is that firing and commotion without?" he shouted, springing to the barricaded window which only overlooked the court.

The guard, who was a heavily-armed and tall Portuguese, with an air half-military, half-naval, preserved in keeping by a tall chasseur's cap, a sailor's jacket, and loose trousers, paused a moment to take a quid from a roll of tobacco he held in his fist, before he turned to the window, and replied, a malign expression lighting up his black eyes—

"Holy St. Antoine, caballeros, but you need not be so warm! it is only a bit of a trial among the men to see who is the stronger."

"How mean you, guard?"

"I mean, that the party that proves the strongest below on the beach there, will either let you remain peaceably where you are till Captain Lafitte returns, or take you forth to dangle by the neck from the live oak before the gate."

"What! You jest!" exclaimed, in great perturbation, the officer of his majesty's royal colonial marines. "Villain, you jest!" and the fingers of his gloved hand, involuntarily sought the precincts of his windpipe, with tender solicitude.

"Jest! do you call that jest, senor?" as a loud shout filled the air, mingled with cries of—

"Seize the spies! down with the gates!" Above all of which was heard the voice of Captain Getzendanner, in vain exerted to quell the turmoil.

The officers, like resolute men, determined to sell their lives as dearly as possible. Each drawing a concealed dirk from his bosom, they stood with folded arms, facing the window commanding the main entrance to the court from without, toward which the noise was rapidly approaching.

The guard himself, mounted a flight of steps leading to the flat roof of the guard-house, which not only commanded a view of the ground outside of the defenses, but of the whole island, the southern sea, the passes, and the bay, with its fleet riding quietly at anchor.

"By St Josef!" he exclaimed as he gained the summit, and cast his eyes beneath upon the tumultuous scene.

The green esplanade, or terrace, sloping from the fort to the beach, was dark with a dense crowd of men, all under the intensest excitement, which they manifested by shouts, execrations, and brandishing of various weapons in the air. The crowd, consisting of persons of all nations, tongues, and hues, mostly in the garb of seamen, seemed to the eye of the guard divided into two unequal divisions. One of these was assembled, with arms in their hands, around the gate, and near a large oak growing by it, under the command of Getzendanner, who with loud oaths, a saber in one hand, and a cocked pistol in the other, was facing another party, pressing toward the gate, some of whom were armed with pistols, harpoons, and heavy spars. The last slung between eight or ten men, by ropes, in rude imitation of the ancient battering-ram, threatened destruction to the barred gate, for which it was evidently designed.

The two hostile bands, with ready weapons, were eying each other with looks of hatred.

"Den t'ousand tyfils, and py all de shaint, you s'all not pass into de camp, Miles Cosgrove—to pe shures!" continued the lieutenant, his face livid with rage, and eyes sparkling with determination, as a huge seaman, with an Irish physiognomy advanced, with a handspike, a little in advance of the mutineers; "you once shaved mein life, Miles, and I don't forget it, put I will make a port-hole in your long carcass, if you move anoder step forward!"

"Misther Lieutenant," replied the Irishman calmly, lifting his hand to his hat, "we mane to boort not wone hair of your head, but we are resolved," and he raised his voice so that all, even the prisoners in the guard-room, heard his words, "we are resolved to seize them British officers—they are spies, and they have either desaved Captain Lafitte, or he himself is a traitor! So stand aside, captain dear, an' let us pass. You have but a handful of men to oppose us!" and he cast his eyes contemptuously over the small party of better disciplined buccaneers, who rallied around their officer to aid him in upholding that discipline which they knew could alone hold their dangerous community together.

The number that met his eye was indeed small, for most of those who had at first opposed the measure, when they saw the popularity of the cause espoused by the other party, like sager politicians on more distinguished theaters, wisely went over to the stronger side.

The Irishman then turned his eye back upon his own followers, numbering six to one of his opponents.

"Be discreet, captain, and let us pass peaceably into the fort," he said, with some show of sullen earnestness. "See you these men, sir?" he added with increased ferocity, pointing to his rude and undisciplined force; "they will pass through that gate if they pass over your dead bodies."

Getzendanner, finding resistance vain against such a fierce and overwhelming torrent, replied:

"On one condition shall you pass de gate: dat you give me your vord, Miles Cosgrove—and I know de value you place on dat—dat you vill only mount one guard from your mutinous crew over dem prisoners till Lafitte comes on shore, and den refer de decisions of dis matter to him. Dish ish mein vish—to pe shure!"

"I give you the pledge, Misther Lieutenant, that you ask," said the Irishman, who was chief mate of one of the pirate's cruisers.

"Den you s'all pe admitted," he replied, and a cunning, treacherous expression glowed in his eyes as he spoke, requiring more than the Irishman's penetration to detect.

"Ho, dere, Weshton! unbar de gate, and obey your first orders!"

With as rapid a step as was consistent with his corporeal dignity, the lieutenant withdrew his men, who might number about seventy, and moved round the angle of the building toward a stockade or exterior fort in the rear of the main defenses, while the besiegers rushed in a mass to the entrance. Too impatient to wait the unlocking of bolts and bars, those who bore the suspended spar rushed at half-speed against the gate, which, partly unbarred, gave way before the tremendous power of the beam, swung with tremendous momentum against it.

The forcing of the gate was followed by a shout, and a rapid and tumultuous rush into the narrow passage.

All at once a fearful cry burst from twenty throats.

"Hold, there! back! back! hold!" cried the Irish leader of the assault, in a voice of terror; and in another moment a match would have been applied to the long-gun by Weston, in obedience to the command of Lafitte, repeated as he left the passage open to the gate by the wily lieutenant, though not understood at the time by the mutineers.

The appalled men uttered a shriek of dismay, and those who had the most presence of mind fell flat on their faces; the rest, in wild confusion and terror, crowded back upon one another, uttering cries and imprecations of despair and fury.

At this fearful crisis the bars of the grated window were wrenched out, one after another, by an iron hand, and Lockyer, springing from the aperture, grasping one of them, overthrew the guard who attempted to intercept him, and just as the torch was about to ignite the powder, to send a shower of iron hail into the midst of that living mass of human beings before it, Weston's hand was arrested by his irresistible grasp, and the flaming torch hurled far over the heads of the multitude, and quenched in the sea.

"By the twelve apostles, Sir Englishman, you have saved your life by that bold act," exclaimed the astonished Irishman, as soon as he could recover from his momentary surprise, as amid the cheers of his party, Lockyer drew back a step and surveyed with a firm manner and folded arms the motley crew before him. "By St. Patrick, men, but we may thank that stranger that we did not make our dinner on grape-shot and slugs."

A shout of "Viva el Ingles!—viven los Ingleses!" replied.

From the momentary check received by the mutineers at sight of the gun standing in their path, and on account of the sudden change of sentiment produced by it among those in advance, who had witnessed the bold and humane act of the gallant Englishman, it was easy to direct the current of their feelings in another channel.

"Give back now, my honies. You see this Englishman is no spy, or he'd have let that

bloody spalpeen, Weston, blow us into purgatory."

"Return, sir, to the guard-room," he added, addressing the officer, who was now as much the idol of their respect as he was before the object of their hatred, "and you shall be protected until Captain Lafitte comes on shore."

The crowd acquiesced in the proposition of their herculean leader, with a shout, and turned their rage against Weston, who, on being defeated in his object, had retreated with his guard into the quarters of their commander, which were constructed both for strength and defense and firmly secured the entrance.

The English officer was once more shut up in the guard-room with his fellow-prisoner, while Cosgrove, after posting a guard at the door and window, attempted to restore order among his undisciplined associates. They had now found a worthy object upon which to vent the rage which the gallant act of the Englishman had turned from himself and his fellow-prisoner, and bringing the gun so recently directed against their own bosoms to bear upon the door of the building containing the guard, with cries of revenge, they were only waiting for a torch, for which one of their number had been sent, to drive the whole charge of grape through the door and force a passage to their victims.

Suddenly there was a movement, and "Lafitte!—the captain!" passed hurriedly from mouth to mouth.

"What means all this?" cried the chief, pressing through the crowd, which shrunk back before his lightning eye and upraised saber. "Take that, sir!" and the hand which was about to apply the burning brand to the priming of the cannon fell, still grasping the blazing wood, severed from the arm by a single blow from his saber.

Then springing upon the gun with a drawn pistol in each hand, his eye flashing and his tall, athletic figure expanded with rage, while a broad circle was made around him, as the men involuntarily drew back from the summary justice of his ready hand, he continued, vehemently:

"How is it that I cannot leave the camp half an hour, but there is mutiny among ye, knaves! By the holy St. Peter! you shall remember this morning's work! Who are the ringleaders of this fray? Who, I say?"—and his voice rung in their ears as he sternly surveyed the mutineers. He added, after a moment's silence: "Come forward!" and his eyes passed quickly over the silent and moody multitude, each man, as he dropped his own, felt that they were fixed individually upon himself.

"What—Cosgrove! my trusty Miles Cosgrove!" exclaimed the pirate, as the tall Irishman stepped forth from among his fellows. "And yet I might have thought it," he added; "it were a miracle to find one of you a stranger to treachery. What could have led you," he continued, raising his voice, "thus boldly to despise the authority of your captain, and throw off the discipline of our community? Speak, sir! what was your object in making this mad assault upon the garrison of the fortress—a small one indeed, for we thought friends, and not traitors, were around us! What have you to answer, sir?"

"Captain Lafitte! I have this defense," said Cosgrove, coming forward and speaking with a firm countenance and a clear eye, which shrunk not beneath the stern gaze of his superior.

And in a few words he detailed the circumstances as they had happened.

"Cosgrove, I believe you. You are impulsive and headstrong, but I think, in the main, faithful," said Lafitte, as he concluded.

He had calmly listened to the recapitulative defense of the ringleader, which, from the mutterings and pleasurable exclamations that proceeded from the various quarters of the fort, differently affected his hearers.

"Well, my men," he continued, raising his voice, "will you return to your duty, and to your vessels, if no further notice is taken of this matter?"

"Ay, ay! all, all!" unanimously replied the multitude.

"Will you freely leave me to deal with these prisoners?"

"Freely, captain, freely," said a hundred voices.

"I thank you, one and all. A scene, like this witnessed to-day, I trust will never be repeated. Return to your duty. To the officers under my command I would suggest the expediency of preparing for the threatened attack from the squadron, rumored to be fitting out against us at New Orleans; and laying aside private animosities and prejudices, party feelings or unjust suspicions, let us adopt for our own the wary motto of the States."

His address was received with acclamations by his men, who, in a few moments, each under his respective officer, departed for the fleet, leaving behind only the regular guard of the post.

"Messieurs," said Lafitte, approaching the window of the guard-room, from which his guests had been silent and deeply-interested spectators of the scene passing before them, "I congratulate you on your safety amidst this wild

commotion of human passions. Such tempests are fiercer than the storms and waves of the ocean to contend with. You may thank your own daring, and not my authority, that this storm is allayed. It would have cost me the lives of many brave men to have quelled it. You are no longer under restraint. I hailed, as I came under the stern of your brig, and your pinnace is now approaching the shore."

Here he whispered to Theodore, who hastened into his quarters.

"Allow me, messieurs," he continued, "to express my sincere regret at the unpleasant situation in which you have been placed. You have seen that I can scarcely control the wild spirits around me, except by what may be thought cruel and unnecessary severity. But should I abate, for a moment, a feather's weight of the discipline or authority I adopt, I should lose my command or my head."

Theodore now approached with the swords of the officers, which were courteously tendered them by Lafitte, with an apology for detaining them. After doing ample justice to the sparkling stores of the Barratarian, presented on a richly-chased salver by his slave, accompanied by Lafitte, they left the garrison; and crossing the green terrace, stretching before it quite to the beach, were in a few minutes at their boat.

"Messieurs," said the outlaw, with dignity and address, as the British officer, before stepping into his boat, desired to be told what conclusion he had formed in relation to the proposals of Admiral Percy, "in reference to this important subject, some delay is indispensable. The confusion which prevailed in my camp this morning has prevented me from considering, with that attention I should wish to, the offers made me by your Government. If you will grant me a fortnight's delay—such a length of time is necessary to enable me to put my affairs in order, and attend to other things which peremptorily demand my present attention—at the termination of this period I will be entirely at your disposal. You may communicate with me, then, by sending a boat to the eastern pass, an hour before sunset, where I shall be found. You have inspired me, Captain Lockyer, with more confidence," he said, sincerely, "than the admiral, your superior officer, himself could have done. With you alone I wish to deal, and from you, also, I will reclaim, in due time, the reward of the services which I may render you."

His decided tone and manner gave Captain Lockyer no hope of being able to draw from him a present decisive reply; he, therefore, merely said:

"I must, I find, though reluctantly enough, comply with your request, Captain Lafitte. On the evening of the fourteenth day from the present, we will again ask your determination. I trust it will be that which will give you an opportunity of securing a high and honorable name among men, and be instrumental in annexing Louisiana to his majesty's crown. Good-morning, sir."

"Good-morning, messieurs," replied Lafitte. As the pinnace moved swiftly away from the beach, he stood alone—the sea-breeze playing coolly upon his brow—the broad Gulf, with a low murmur, unrolling its waves at his feet—the rich forest rising in majesty behind him, and the deep blue skies above him—yet all were unseen, unheard, unfelt by him. After gazing thoughtfully a few moments after the receding boat, he folded his arms upon his breast, and walked slowly back to camp.

The sun had just set, the evening of the day in which the events we have recorded transpired, when Lafitte, his tall and commanding person enveloped in a cloak, issued from the gate of the fortress, after giving several brief orders to Captain Getzendanner, who was stationed, with his portly mien and goodly corporeal dimensions, just within the gate, as he passed. Cudjoe followed him with an awkward, rolling gait, as he walked rapidly toward a point at the extremity of the anchorage, on the north side of the island, closely engaged in conversation with Theodore, who moved by his side with a light step. After a rapid walk of about forty minutes, the three stopped under a broad tree, casting a shadow over a narrow inlet, penetrating a little way into the island, in which a small boat could be indistinctly seen, through the obscurity of the night.

Just as they entered the shadow of the tree, they were challenged by a seaman, who, with a cutlass in his hand, was pacing fore and aft, under the tree, with the habitual tread learned by that class of men, in their lonely watches upon their vessels' decks.

"Our country!" replied Lafitte, in a low voice. "What ho! Corneille, is all still in the fleet?" he added.

"Ay, ay, sir; there is nothing within a mile of us."

"Are you all ready?"

"All, sir."

"Theodore, see that the orders are notified. I choose not that the fleet should mark our movements. They will be in chase of us for another godsend of English spies, and I prefer passing unnoticed. Cudjoe, place yourself in the bows," he said, playfully, "and show your tusks gener-

ously: if they should spy us, they will take us only for an inshore fisherman, with his low-lights hung out."

In a few moments the boat moved noiselessly out from the creek in which it had been hitherto concealed, and after a few light but skillful strokes, by the four oarsmen by whom it was manned, shot rapidly into the open bay, or, as it has been more recently denominated, lake of Barrataria.

Long after the hour of midnight, they approached a secret, and scarcely discernible outlet, nearly lost in the dark shadows of the shore. Here they lowered their sail, and yielding once more to the impulse of the oars, the boat shot into the mouth of the creek, and suddenly disappeared in the deep gloom which enveloped it.

CHAPTER XXV.

A CITY BEFORE A SIEGE.

A FEW weeks before that memorable battle, the last, and most decisive, fought during the recent war between the United States and Great Britain, the citizens of New Orleans were thrown into consternation, by the rumor of extensive naval and military preparations making by the British, who were assembled in great force along the northern coast of the Mexican Gulf; and this alarm was still increased by the report, that they meditated a descent upon the capital of Louisiana.

This point, next to the city of Washington, had been always deemed, in the eye of England, the most important conquest she could make upon the territory of her enemy.

And here all her forces were now concentrated, for the purpose of striking a blow, which should at once terminate the war, and make the Americans of the West, to use her proud language, "prisoners in the heart of their own country."

As the rumors became more frequent, and finally were corroborated by official dispatches, directed to the legislative assembly, which hastily convened to deliberate upon measures for the safety of the country, the panic increased, until distress, confusion, and forebodings filled the minds of all. Menaced by so formidable a foe, without any regular soldiery, or means of defense in which to place confidence, they lost all decision and energy.

The senators, whose patriotism led them to propose such steps as would place the city in a state for receiving the enemy, were overruled by others, whose prejudices inclined them either to the side of the British, or to neutrality, in the character of French citizens, or as subjects of Spain, with which countries the English were then at peace.

At this period of indecision and civil anarchy, and when every good citizen and reflecting man was looking about for some one who would lead in this emergency, the American chief of the southern forces arrived at New Orleans. His presence produced a sudden and healthy change in the aspect of affairs, and before he had been in the city one hour, his name was upon every lip, either with hope, or pride, or hostility, and all lovers of their country looked to him as their leader in the great struggle before them.

His presence and language roused them to a defense of their rights, and kindled patriotism and hatred for the enemy in their breasts. He excited them to vigilance, and called upon them to put forth all their energies for the approaching trial. He was seconded by the Governor of Louisiana, a few distinguished senators, and numerous citizens.

Every resource that could contribute to the safety of the city was in requisition, and operations on an extensive scale for its defense, projected with military promptness and skill. General confidence soon became everywhere restored, and with the exception of some disaffected citizens, who were strictly watched, there was but one heart and hand enlisted in the mutual defense. Regiments were formed of the citizens, and, throwing off the habits of a life, each man became at once a soldier. Women and children even partook of the general enthusiasm; and when the enemy were at the gates, the day before the battle, the citizens appeared more like rejoicing for a victory than preparing to withstand a siege.

For the greater security of the country, martial law was at length proclaimed throughout New Orleans and its environs, and the whole city became at once under the rigid discipline of a fortified camp. Patrols of veterans paraded the streets, and guard-boats were stationed at various points on the river before the city.

It is at this period of the war, and under these peculiar features of it, at the expense of a slight anachronism, that our scenes once more open.

The morning after leaving the island of Barrataria, or Grand Terre, the party, consisting of the buccaneer chief, his young companion Theodore, and faithful slave Cudjoe, having rowed all the preceding night through the sluggish and sinuous bayous, reached a hamlet of fishermen's huts, nearly hid in cypress trees and tall grass, which inclosed it on every side. Here they delayed, until once more, under the

cover of darkness, they should be enabled to enter the vigilantly-guarded city unperceived.

About a mile below the city, opposite the suburb Marigny, in the mouth of a narrow canal connecting the bayou, which the outlaw and his party ascended, with the river, about half an hour after night had wholly assumed her empire, a boat might have been discovered, nearly concealed in the shadow of a large oak, its tendril-like branches drooping until they touched the water. In it sat four boatmen, resting upon their oars, in the attitude of men prepared to use them at the slightest command.

Against the tree, with his arms habitually folded upon his chest, the pirate thoughtfully leaned, divested of his cloak, and dressed in the ordinary garb of his men, from whom he was distinguished only by his superior height, and the deference shown him by his companions.

Upon a gnarled root of the tree, which the action of the water had laid bare, sat his companion, engaged in watching the changing lights moving along the opposite shore, and listening to the challenges of the guard-boats.

Cudjoe was hanging by his arms and feet, from one of the drooping branches, as motionless as the limb which bore him. The air was still. Not a leaf moved, and the deep silence reigning at the moment, was made more striking by the reedy-toned ripple of the water curling among the tips of the slender branches, as, borne down by the weight of the slave, they dipped into it.

"Cudjoe, down, sir!" said Lafitte, suddenly addressing the slave.

The African dropped from the limb and stood by his master.

"You swim, Cudjoe?"

"Yes, massa, Cudjoe swim like fis'."

"Do you see the nearest boat, just under that bright star, in the range of the double lights?"

"Yes, massa."

"It is one of the watch-boats. There are but two men in it; go up the levee till you are about one hundred rods above it, then strike off into the river, and let the current drift you against the bows. If you are cautious, you will approach unperceived. Then get into the boat, and master the men the best way you can—so you effect it without noise. But take no life, slave. When you have captured the boat scull it here!"

"Yes, massa," he replied, displaying his tusks with delight.

"Go, then."

With a stealthy step the slave left the shadow of the tree, and glided along the levee until he was above the boat; then, from a projecting limb, he dropped himself noiselessly into the river, his head in the obscure starlight, resembling, as he swam, the end of a buoy, or a shapeless block floating on the surface of the water.

CHAPTER XXVI.

AN INTERRUPTED COLLOQUY.

THE two men were sitting in the guard-boat, engaged in social discourse, one with his face to the stern, the other, upon whose features the rays of the lamp shone brightly, fronting the bows.

"Oh! the Lord look down upon us!" suddenly shrieked one of the men, and fell senseless on the bottom of the boat.

Before the other could turn to see the cause of the alarm, the slave sprung upon him, and he felt the iron clutch of Cudjoe's fingers around his throat, and his arms pressed immovably to his side, before he could make any resistance. Until his captive grew black in the face, the slave kept his hold; and when he found him incapable of resistance, seized the oars and pulled into the mouth of the canal, opposite which the boat had now drifted.

"Done like Cudjoe," said his master, who had watched with interest the success of his plan.

"Ha, slave! did I not tell you to shed no blood?" he added angrily, as his eye rested upon the prostrate forms of the boatmen.

"Cudjoe no spill one drop," replied the slave; "one sojer sinky me alligator, curse him; he make one yell and den go to de debble, dead directly. Dis oder big sojer—he only little bit choke."

"Take them out," he said to his crew, "and lay them on the bank."

One soon revived, and looked around him in moody silence.

"You are a prisoner," said Lafitte.

"And to the devil, I suppose, stranger," he said, looking at Cudjoe's ungainly figure.

The next moment, a thought of his lonely family swelled his bosom, and a desire to escape suddenly inspired him. Leaping from the ground, while his captors thought him incapable of rising, he threw himself headlong into the river. In a few seconds, they heard the water agitated, far below them, by his athletic arms, as he rose to the surface. Gaining the shore on the lower side of the canal, and beyond pursuit, his receding footsteps shortly died away, far down the levee.

"Better he were free," said Lafitte; "that man would lose his life, before he would betray the watchword. But this looks like baser metal," he added placing his foot upon the body

of the other an Irishman, who, having been deluged with a few capfuls of the cold river water, revived.

"Oh! murther, murther!" he exclaimed, as a generous discharge nearly drowned him. "Och, murther me! It is kilt you are, Dennis Aughrim! Och, bone—"

"Up, sir, up, and stop that howling," said Lafitte, taking him by the collar; and lifting him as a less muscular man would a child, he placed him upon his feet:

"What is the password of the night?"

"The word is, yer honor?" said Dennis, his consciousness partially restored, "devil a bit do I know, however I coome here. Oh, the alligathur!" he suddenly exclaimed, looking about him, as if he expected again to see the object of his fears; "and did yer honor pick me from the wather, where he draggd me to devour me? Oh! holy St. Patrick! but it was a devil of a craather."

"Give me the countersign," demanded Lafitte, impatiently.

"By dad, wid a heart an' a will would I oblige yer honor; the Mither in heaven send blessin' on blessin' on yer honor's head, for savin' me from droonin'; but Tim, it is wid do bit paper."

"No trifling, soldier, or you will be worse off than in an alligator's jaws!" replied his captor sternly.

"Oh, thin, dear, yer honor! but I must spake it low," and standing on his toes, he whispered in the ears of Lafitte, the password of the night.

"Tis as I thought," he exclaimed.

"Now get into this boat and guide us to the city; serve me faithfully, and you shall soon be free; betray or deceive me, and your head shall answer for it."

"Oh, blissid Mither! that Dennis Aughrin should be prisoner to the Englishers! and, poor craythur! that he should lit them into the city, to make it a kingdom. Och, Dennis! but you'll have to go back to ould Ireland! Ameriky is no more to be the free country o' the world. Och, murther me! that Dinnis's own mither's son should come to this!" he soliloquized, as he reluctantly stepped into the boat for the purpose of betraying his trust.

Leaving orders for his men to remain in their concealment until his return, and be on the alert against surprise, the buccaneer chief stepped into the guard-boat with Theodore and the slave.

Taking an oar himself, he gave the other to his guide and prisoner, bidding Theodore and Cudjoe lie close in the bottom of the barge, and pushed boldly out from the bank, and confidently passed the line of boats, every challenge from them being answered by the familiar voice of the Irishman.

In about half an hour after leaving the shore they pulled into the inlet of canal Marigny, and nearly under the guns of fort St. Charles. At this point were collected many other boats and fishing-craft. Having passed the chain of guard-boats with security, he pulled alongside of the levee, and into the midst of the boats, without attracting observation.

Leaving the Irishman in the barge under the charge of Cudjoe, of whom he stood in mortal fear, although now recognizing him to be human—the chief, accompanied by his companion, mounted the levee, and with an indifferent and careless pace, passed under the walls of the fort. He traversed the magnificent esplanade in front of the city, crowded with citizens and soldiers, along which mounted officers were riding at speed, and detachments of soldiers, moving swiftly and without music, down the road which wound along the banks of the river. At every corner he passed by guards posted there, and nearly every man he met was armed; and as the lamps shone upon their faces, he discovered that expectation of some important event dwelt thereon, giving a military sternness to their visages.

The parade was nearly deserted, except by citizen soldiers, too old to bear arms in the field. Lafitte was not questioned or challenged by any one, for the hour of nine, when vigilance more thoroughly reigned throughout the strictly-guarded city, had not yet arrived.

Turning from the levee and leaving the parade on his left, he passed up St. Anne to Charles street without lifting his eyes to the cathedral, whose dark towers rose abruptly and gloomily against the sky, or delaying to admire the government-house and the other adjacent public buildings.

A soldier in the uniform of Luteau's colored regiment was pacing in front of the government-house with his musket to his shoulder. Against the wall of the church leaned a group of citizens and soldiers, all of whom, though apparently off duty, wore arms, and had the air of men who momentarily expected to be called into action. A neighboring guard-house was full of soldiers smoking cigars, burnishing their arms, and discussing the great object of the expected attack upon their city. Occasionally a private or an officer in uniform hurried past on the trottoir, neither turning to the right nor left, and briefly replying to, or wholly disregarding the questions occasionally put to them by the inquisitive passers-by.

"Soldier, is the Governor in the city?" inquired Lafitte, stopping the guard.

"You must be a stranger here, monsieur, to put such a question," he answered, eying him suspiciously; "next to her noble general, is he not the guardian of our city?"

"You say well, monsieur—he is then in the Government-house?" inquired the buccaneer.

"Would you speak with the Governor, senor?" said one of the soldiers, stepping up.

"I have important papers for him," replied Lafitte, looking at the man fixedly.

"You will find him then at the quarters of the general in Faubourg Marigny—he rode by with his staff not half an hour since," replied the man.

"Thank you, monsieur," said Lafitte.

As he spoke the bell of the cathedral tolled nine, and simultaneously the report of a heavy piece of artillery placed in front upon the parade awoke the echoes of the city, warning every householder to extinguish his lights, and confining the inhabitants to their own dwellings. The foot of the loiterer hastened as the first note struck his ear, and a thousand lights at once disappeared from the windows of the dwellings, and before the sound of the last stroke of the bell died away, the city became silent and dark. After that hour until sunrise, with the exception of here and there one bearing about him a passport from the American chief, every one abroad was on the severe duty of a soldier.

"You have the pass, monsieur?" inquired the soldier whom he first addressed, extending his hand for it, as the clock broke the stillness of the night.

Lafitte gave the word which had passed him through the chain of boats.

"It will not do, monsieur," replied the guard, "have you not a passport?"

The soldier who had directed him where to find the Governor whispered in his ear:

"Pensacola."

Lafitte, starting, repeated the word to the guard, adding:

"I gave you before by mistake, the word for the river."

"It is well, monsieur," said the soldier, giving back, "pass with your attendant."

Lafitte and his companion, relieved from their embarrassing situation by the kind aid of the soldier, retraced their steps to the suburb, occupied by the commander-in-chief.

As they were crossing Rue St. Philippe, some one called the name of the former in a distinct whisper. He turned and distinguished the figure of the soldier who had given him the passport.

"Ha! is it you, Pedro? I know you then! But how is it that you have become a soldier?"

"Only for a time, Senor Captain—I must not starve."

"Nor will you, if you can find other man's meat," said Lafitte, laughingly. "I thought you had taken your prize money and gone to Havana."

"No, senor; a pair of large, black eyes and one small bag of five-franc pieces tempted me out of that."

"That is, you are married."

"It is a sad truth, senor. I am now captain of a cabaret on Rue Royal, and my dame is first officer."

"And Master Theodore, how fare you, senor?" he said, abruptly changing the subject, and addressing the youth. "It is many a month since I have seen your bright eye. Well, you are coming up to the tall man," continued the quondam pirate, curling his mustache, and drawing up to the full altitude of his five feet, until his eyes reached the chin of the younger buccaneer.

"You will yet walk a deck bravely."

"How did you recognize me so soon?" inquired Lafitte.

"When you folded your arms and threw your head up, in the way you have, while you spoke to the guard, I said to myself, 'That's Captain Lafitte, or I'm no Benedict.'"

"Well, your penetration has done me good service, Pedro."

"Yes, senor; I wish you may always profit as well by having your disguise penetrated. Your tall figure and way of carrying your head will betray you more than once to-night, if you are on secret business, as I conjecture. A little stoop, and a lower gait, like a padre, if such be the case, would be wisdom in you, as you walk the streets. You know the reward offered for your head by the Governor."

"I do, Pedro; and you have, no doubt, seen my proclamation for the Governor's, wherein I have done him much honor, valuing his head five times at what he fixes mine," said he, laughingly.

"And yet you are seeking him," exclaimed Pedro. "This is strange; but it is like you, Captain Lafitte," he added, impressively. "There were six out of the seven standing with me when you came up, who would have taken your life for a sou, if they could. Be careful, senor! But if you are in danger, you will find many brave hearts and ready hands, even in this city, to aid you. If you would like a taste of Bordeaux, or old claret of the true brand, at any time, I should be honored if you seek it in

my humble cabaret. The wine, the cabaret—all I have, is at your service, senor."

"I'll come, if thirst drive me; so, adieu, and thanks for your timely service this night."

"Adios, senor; the saints prosper you!" said Pedro, taking leave of his chief, and returning to his comrades; while Lafitte, with a firm and steady pace, proceeded to the quarters of the commanding general.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE GOVERNOR AND HIS VISITOR.

In the Faubourg Marigny, and not far from the canal of the same name, stood, at the period of the war, a large dwelling, constructed after that combination of the Spanish and French orders peculiar to the edifices of this suburb of the Louisianian capital.

To the house in question led an avenue, bordered by trees, terminating upon the street in a heavy gateway. The gateway of solid oak, and placed between square pillars of brick, each surmounted by an eagle, his wings extended in the act of rising from the column. The house, situated about twenty yards from the gate and fronting the levee and the noble river beyond, upon whose bosom rode several armed vessels, was square and very large, surrounded by ancient trees which, even at noonday, defended it from the Southern sun.

About nine on the evening to which our story refers, this dwelling presented a scene of warlike animation. Sentinels were posted in front; officers, arm in arm, were promenading in grave or lively discourse before the door; horses, richly caparisoned for war, were held by slaves in military livery on the street before the mansion, where also was posted a guard in honor of the present distinguished occupant. Citizens were occasionally passing in and out, with busy faces and hasty steps; and horsemen, their brows laden with care or weighty tidings, rode frequently up, and dismounting, threw the bridles of their foaming horses to those in waiting, and rapidly traversed the avenue to the house, while others, hurriedly coming out, mounted and spurred away at full speed.

Drawn a little toward the fire-place, in which blazed a cheerful fire, necessary even in this sunny clime to dissipate the damp and chill of the night, stood a large square table. It was surrounded by a shade lamp, and covered with papers, charts, open letters, plans of fortifications, and mathematical instruments. A beaver military hat without a plume, and an elegant small-sword with its belt attached, also lay beside a tall, gentlemanly man, in the full dress of a military chief, who was seated at the table, examining very intently the large map of Louisiana.

The rays of the lamp fell obliquely upon his high forehead, over which the hair, slightly sprinkled with gray, was arranged after the military fashion of the period, and cast into deep shadow his eyes and the lower portion of his face.

Raising his head from the chart for an instant, to address an officer standing on the opposite side of the table, his features, in the glare of the lamp which now shone full upon them, became plainly visible.

The contour of his face, now pale and thin, apparently from recent illness, was nearly oval. His age might be about fifty. His forehead was high and bold, with arched and slightly projecting brows, bent, where they met, into a slight habitual frown, indicating a nervousness and irritability of temperament, qualified, however, by the benevolent expression about his mouth.

A gentleman in the dress of an American naval captain, much younger than the soldier, with a brown cheek, frank air, and manly features, leaned over his shoulder with his eyes fixed upon a chart, occasionally making a remark, or replying to some question put in a quick, searching tone by the military chieftain.

In the opposite or back part of the room walked two gentlemen—both of much dignity of person and manner; one of whom, by his dress, was an officer in high command; the other was only distinguished from a citizen by the military insignia of a small-sword, buff gloves, which he held in his hand, and a military hat, carried under his left arm. They were engaged in low but animated conversation—one of them often gesticulating with the energy of a Frenchman, which his aquiline features, lofty retreating forehead, foreign air and accent, betrayed him to be. The citizen was graver, yet apparently equally interested in the subject of conversation.

In a recess of one of the windows stood a group of young officers engaged in low-toned but animated conversation; two or three of a graver age, promenaded the back part of the apartment, conversing closely in suppressed voices upon subjects, which from their manner were of the deepest import.

Suddenly, a heavy, ringing tread was heard in the hall, and an officer of dragoons hastily entered unannounced. Without noticing the addresses—

"Ha! colonel! good-evening."

"What news, colonel?"

"Hot haste, ha! you Mississippians do noth-

ing by halves!" from several of the young officers who crowded round him, he approached the table where the general officer was seated, and communicated to him some information, which, from its instantaneous effect, must have been of the most surprising nature.

Starting from his chair, his brow contracted, his eye flashing, and his cheek reddened with emotion, he exclaimed, in a stern voice, which rung through the apartment—

"Capitulate! capitulate! the legislature! capitulate! by the high heavens we will see to that!—Where learned you this damning treachery of our disaffected senate, colonel?" he inquired in a loud voice, addressing the officer, while his eye burned with rage.

"But now, sir," he replied; "as I passed the capitol, I heard it whispered among the crowd assembled before the doors. Dismounting, I ascended to the outer gallery and found the house closed—yet—"

"A secret conspiracy!" said the general, pacing the room in excitement—"go on, sir!"

"As I was about to descend, a member, M. Lufort, came out and told me they were at that moment agitating the subject of capitulation to the enemy, and making at once a proffer to surrender the city into their hands—"

"The false, cowardly traitors!" exclaimed the commanding general incensed, and in a loud, angry voice. "By heaven, they shall be blown up with their crazy old capitol to the skies. Governor," he continued, with readily assumed courtesy, turning to the gentleman in the blue dress of a citizen, "my immediate pressing duties will not allow me to go in person and wait on these traitors. To your excellency I intrust the office. Take a sufficient force with you—closely watch their motions and the moment a project of offering a capitulation to the enemy shall be fully disclosed—place a guard at the door, and confine them to their chamber. If they will not take the field, they had better be blown up to the third heavens, than remain there to plot treason against the state."

The Governor, accompanied by two or three of the young officers, immediately left the apartment to execute the command.

"My object in taking this step, commodore," said the general, quietly resuming his examination of the chart as the Governor left the room, at the same time addressing the naval officer, "is, that they may be able to proceed to their business without injury to the state; now, whatever schemes they entertain will remain within themselves, without the power of circulating to the prejudice of any other interest than their own. Like the serpent in the fable, if they will bite, they must fix their fangs in their own coils."

As he spoke, a messenger entered and handed him a sealed paper. Hastily breaking it open, he glanced over it with a quick eye.

"To horse, young gentlemen," he cried in a sharp tone, crushing the paper, and addressing the group of officers; then rising and buckling on his sword, he took his cloak from a chair beside him, and wrapped it closely about his tall form.

"Well, commodore," he said, addressing the naval officer, and taking up his cocked hat and gloves, "you will co-operate, as we have determined, with the land forces. Urgent business now calls me away; I will communicate with you on my return."

"General," he continued, addressing the French-looking military officer, whom we have already introduced to the notice of the reader, "I shall be honored with your attendance for an hour. The night dew will not hurt veterans like you and I, although it may derange, perhaps," he added pleasantly, "the mustaches of the younger members of our staff."

At this moment the Governor returned, and after briefly stating to him the situation of affairs in relation to the legislature, the general said:

"I will return before eleven, your excellency. If you will do the honors of my household until then, we will take our leisure to look over this business the traitorous senators have thrust upon our hands, as if they were not already filled."

Taking the arm of the Louisianian general, he then left the room; and in a few seconds the sound of his horse's feet moving rapidly down the street, fell upon the ears of the Governor, now left alone in the apartment.

Approaching the table, as the last sound of the receding horsemen faded from his ear, he cast his eyes over the map recently occupying the attention of the general; and after thoughtfully tracing with a pencil, a line from the mouth of bayou Mezent on lake Borgne to the Mississippi, he said, speaking audibly:

"Here is the avenue upon which Pakenham seizes. It will conduct him close to the city. Well, let him come—he will be caught in the nets his own policy spreads. But here are papers from the secretary of war! I must look to them."

While thus engaged, and about half an hour after the departure of the general and his staff, the challenge of the sentinel stationed before the street door, was followed by a low reply, and the heavy tread of a man traversing the hall.

The door suddenly opened, and the Governor lifting his eyes, beheld enter, unannounced, a tall man in the dress of a seaman, who deliberately turned the key in the door and approached him.

The act, the manner, and the appearance of the bold intruder surprised him; and starting from his chair, he demanded who he was, and the nature of his business.

The stranger stood for a moment surveying him in silence, his full dark eye fixed penetratingly upon his features.

"Sir," repeated the Governor, after recovering from his surprise, "to what circumstance am I indebted for the honor of this visit?"

The stranger, without replying, drew from his breast a folded paper, and approaching, while the Governor placed his hand upon his sword, laid it without speaking, upon the table.

He hastily opened and ran his eye over it; then glancing from the paper to the stranger, alternately several times, before he spoke, he at last said, his brow changing with resentment:

"What means this, sir? It is but the printed proclamation for the head of that daring outlaw, Lafitte. Know you aught of him?"

The intruder advanced a step, and calmly folding his arms upon his breast, and fixing his piercing eye upon him, said quietly and firmly:

"He stands before you!"

"Ha!" exclaimed the Governor, starting back; then seizing a pistol which lay near him, he had elevated his voice to alarm the guard, as he leveled the weapon, when Lafitte sprang forward and grasped it.

"Hold, sir! I mean you no harm! It is for your good I am here. If revenge was my object, I would not seek it beneath this roof, and thus place myself in your power. Put up that weapon, your excellency, and listen to me," he added, respectfully.

"Nay, if you have business with me, communicate it briefly, and let there be this distance between us."

"As you desire, sir," replied the Barratarian.

"Be seated, your excellency. I have received communications," he continued, as the Governor, somewhat assured, took a chair and motioned him to another, "from the British commander, that I would confide to you. I feel they are of importance to our common country, which, although outlawed by her, I love."

"You are a strange man, Captain Lafitte—to enter a city where thousands know you, with a reward hanging over your head; and then voluntarily place yourself in the power of the executer of the laws you have violated; on the pretense, too, that you can serve the State, which you have passed your life in injuring! How am I to understand you, sir? Shall I admire your temerity, or pity your duplicity?"

"Different language becomes our interview, monsieur Governor. At no small risk and trouble have I undertaken this expedition. Fearlessly have I placed myself in your excellency's power, trusting that your sense of justice would appreciate my confidence."

"I do appreciate it, sir," replied the Governor, after a moment's deliberative silence; "and whatever, so that you do not forget yourself, may be the issue of this interview, which I warn you must be brief, for the general and his staff will soon return, I pledge you my word as a gentleman, and Governor of this State, that you shall go as free and as secret as you came. I respect your confidence, and will listen to what you have to communicate in reference to the public welfare."

Lafitte then briefly related his interview with the British officer, stated and enlarged upon the overtures so tempting to a band of proscribed men, who, weary of their precarious existence, might be desirous of embracing so favorable an opportunity of recovering an honorable attitude among their fellow-men, by ranging themselves under the banners of a nation so powerful as the English. After stating his reception of the officers, and his expedient to obtain delay to communicate with his excellency, he continued:

"Although a reward is suspended over my head—although I have been hunted like a wild beast by my fellow-citizens—although I am proscribed by the country of my adoption—I will never let pass an opportunity of serving her cause, even to the shedding of my blood. I am willing to make some atonement for the violence done the laws through my instrumentality. I desire to show you how much I love my country—how very dear she is to me! Of this my presence here, and these letters which I bear, are convincing proofs. A British officer of high rank, whose name you will find appended to the papers I lay before you, has made me propositions to which few men would turn a deaf ear. Two of the communications containing them are addressed to me. A third is a proclamation to the citizens of this State, and the fourth, Admiral Percy's instructions to that officer in relation to his overtures to myself."

CHAPTER XXVIII. LAFITTE'S ADVENTURE.

AFTER having placed the papers in the Governor's hands, Lafitte turned away and walked to the window.

"Indeed!" exclaimed the Governor, glancing over the papers preparatory to a more thorough examination, as he read audibly the several signatures. Then taking the letter of the British officer addressed to Lafitte, he read it aloud, commenting upon every few lines.

"I call upon you, with your brave followers, to enter into the service of Great Britain, in which you shall have the rank of captain."

"Ha!" said the Governor, looking up at Lafitte with interest, and surveying, as his eye lingered over it for a moment, his commanding figure.

"Lands will be given to you all," he continued, "in proportion to your respective ranks, in his majesty's colonies in America."

"This is indeed counting the birds rather prematurely," he soliloquized.

"Your property shall be guaranteed—your persons protected. I herewith inclose you a copy of my proclamation to the Louisianians, which will, I trust, point out to you the honorable intentions of my Government."

"Humph! honorable! It is, nevertheless, a fine round period," said the Governor, sarcastically.

"You may be a useful assistant to me in forwarding them; therefore, if you determine, lose no time. We have a powerful reinforcement on its way here. And I hope to cut out some other work for the Americans than oppressing the inhabitants of Louisiana."

"Humph! it is to be hoped so! Well, this is a most praiseworthy document," he continued, laying it aside and again glancing at the pirate, who stood silently at the window, apparently gazing at the stars, while his eye watched every expression of the Governor's features.

"Now, what says this scion of nobility, who styles himself commander of his majesty's fleet," continued his excellency, opening a second paper. "This is addressed to Captain Lockyer, and seems to be a letter of instructions:

"Sir:—You are hereby required and directed, after having received on board an officer belonging to the first battalion of royal colonial marines, to proceed in his majesty's sloop under your command, without a moment's loss of time, for Barrataria. On your arrival at that place, you will communicate with its chief, and urge him to throw himself upon the protection of Great Britain; and should you find the Barratarians inclined to pursue such a step, you will hold out to them that their property shall be secured to them, and that they shall be considered British subjects; and at the conclusion of the war, lands within his majesty's colonies in America will be allotted to them. Should you succeed completely in the object for which you are sent, you will concert such measures for the annoyance of the enemy as you judge best, having an eye to the junction of their small armed vessels with me, for a descent upon the coast."

"So much for the son of Lord Beverly," said the Governor, in a tone of irony. "These papers are growing in importance, Monsieur Lafitte! What is this?"

"A proclamation, by Lieutenant-Colonel Edward Nichols, commanding his Britannic majesty's forces in the Floridas."

"This sounds well."

"NATIVES OF LOUISIANA:—

"On you the first call is made to assist in liberating from a faithless, imbecile Government your paternal soil!—Spaniards, Frenchmen, Italians and British!—whether settled, or residing for a time in Louisiana, on you, also, I call to aid me in this just cause. The American usurpation in this country must be abolished, and the lawful owners of the soil put in possession."

"I am at the head of a large body of Indians, well armed, disciplined and commanded by British officers. Be not alarmed, inhabitants of the country, at our approach; rest assured that these red-men only burn with an ardent desire of satisfaction for the wrongs they have suffered from the Americans, and for this purpose I join you in liberating these southern provinces from the yoke, and driving them into those limits formerly prescribed by my sovereign."

"The Indians have pledged themselves, in the most solemn manner not to injure, in the slightest degree, the persons or property of any but enemies to their Spanish or English fathers. A flag over any door, whether Spanish, French, or British, will be a certain protection, nor dare any Indian put his foot on the threshold thereof, under penalty of death from his own countrymen. Not even an enemy will an Indian put to death, except resisting in arms."

"Accept of my offers; everything I have promised in this paper I guarantee you on the sacred honor of a British officer."

"Given under my hand, at head-quarters."

"These papers, Captain Lafitte, united with your verbal communications, are indeed important," said the Governor, rising and approaching the outlaw, with dignity and respect in his manner.

"I do not wish to offend your feelings, sir," he continued, "but in the relation we stand to each other, I must have authority for acting upon the knowledge of their contents I possess. What other authority than your own word have I that they are genuine?"

"My person, your excellency!" he replied, with firmness and unchanged features. "I am your prisoner till you can ascertain from a more credible source the genuineness of these letters, and the truth of my statements."

"Captain Lafitte," said the Governor, struck with his manner, "I cannot do otherwise than

place confidence in you. I believe you to be sincere. The letters themselves bear upon their face, also, the stamp of genuineness. I will call a council in the morning, composed of some of the principal officers of the navy, army, and militia, and, informing them how I obtained them, submit these letters to their opinions."

"Captain Lafitte," he continued, in a more friendly tone, "I know not the motives which have induced you, all at once, to adopt this honorable course. I am willing to attribute it to the best—a desire to regain your standing in society, atone for your past violence to the offended laws of your country, and, moreover, in the patriotism of a good citizen. As the last I am willing to consider you; and there is my hand, sir, in token of amity between us! The proscription against you shall be revoked, and I shall feel proud to rank you hereafter among the defenders of our common country."

Lafitte, moved by the language of the Governor, replied with emotion:

"Again, your excellency, I feel my bosom glow with virtuous emotion. You do justice to my motives, and I am grateful to you. This reception I had not anticipated when I determined to make you the repository of a secret, on which, perhaps, the tranquillity of the country depended; but I knew that it was in the bosom of a just man, and a true American, endowed with all other qualities which give dignity to society, that I was placing this confidence, and depositing the interests of my country."

"The point I occupy, is doubtless considered important by the enemy. I have hitherto kept on the defensive, on my own responsibility. Now, sir, I offer my services to defend it for the State. If the enemy attach that importance to the possession of the place, they give me room to suspect they do, they may employ means above my strength. In that case, if you accept of my services, your intelligence, and the degree of your confidence in me, will suggest to you the propriety of strengthening the position by your own troops. If your excellency should decline my services, at least I beg you will assist me with your judicious counsel in this weighty affair."

"I know not how to express the pleasure I experience in recognizing this extraordinary change in you, Captain Lafitte," replied the Governor, his noble features beaming with benevolence and gratification. "So far as my influence extends, I accept your services; but there must be a preliminary and indispensable step before I can do so. A pardon for all offenses is first necessary, and this can be granted only by the President. Your disinterested and honorable conduct shall be made known to the council in the morning, and if I can aid you in setting out in your new career, my services and counsels are cheerfully at your command."

"You can do so, your excellency," replied the outlaw.

"In what?"

"In procuring my pardon from the President, and also that of my followers."

"Cheerfully! I will at once, by the next post, recommend you to the favor of the executive."

"I thank you, sir," said Lafitte, turning away with a full heart to conceal his emotion.

The reception he had met with by the Governor, whom he esteemed, and his ready wish to forget his offenses—the prospect of returning to the world, and of regaining his attitude in society, came over him all at once with powerful effect. Then, prominent, and superior to all, the image of Constanza floated before his mind, and his bosom swelled with renewed being.

The Governor remarked his emotion, and with ready delicacy divining the cause, once more turned his attention to the papers which he still held in his hand.

"Before I leave your excellency," said Lafitte, after a few moments' silence—the silence of a heart too full for utterance, "I desire to learn something definite as to the course to be pursued with reference to these disclosures."

"I have offered to defend for you that part of Louisiana I now hold. But as an outlaw I would not be its defender! In the confidence with which you have inspired me, I offer to restore to the State many citizens, now under my command, who, in the eyes of your excellency, have perhaps forfeited that sacred title. I offer you them, however, such as you could wish to find them, ready to exert their utmost in defense of their country. As I have remarked before, the point I occupy is of great importance in the present crisis. I tender not only my own services to defend it, but those of all I command, and the only reward I ask, is, that a stop may be put to the proscription against me and my adherents, by an act of oblivion for all that has been done hitherto. I am, your excellency," and his voice betrayed emotion as he continued, "the stray sheep, wishing to return to the sheepfold." If you were thoroughly acquainted with the nature of my offenses, I should appear much less guilty, and still worthy to discharge the duties of a good

* See Latour's Memoirs of Louisiana: Appendix, p. xiv.

citizen and honest patriot. I might expatiate on the proofs of patriotism I have shown this evening, but I let the fact speak for itself. I beg you to submit to your council and to the executive what I have advanced. Their answer I will await until to-morrow noon, when I will send for it by one who, I trust, will not be molested. Should it be unfavorable to my sincere prayers, I nevertheless assure you, sir, I shall turn my back upon the dazzling offers of the British Government, and forever leave a soil, which, dearly as I love, I am thought unworthy to defend! Thus will I avoid the imputation of having co-operated with the enemy, toward an invasion on that point I hold—which cannot fail to take place—and rest secure in the acquittal of my own conscience."

"My dear sir," said the Governor, with undisguised admiration of his sentiments, "your praiseworthy wishes shall be laid before the gentlemen whose opinions and counsels I shall invite early to-morrow, to aid me in this important affair. Your messenger shall receive an answer by noon. I will also confer upon the subject with the commanding general on his return. Perhaps your pardon," he added hesitatingly, "may rest upon a condition. I have thought of proposing to the council, that your own, and the services of your adherents, be accepted to join the standard of the United States; and if your conduct meet the approbation of the general commanding, I will assure you of his co-operation with me, in a request to the President, to extend to all engaged, a free and full pardon."

"With these conditions I most willingly comply!" said Lafitte. "I must now leave you, sir; but," he added, laying his hand upon his heart, "with sentiments of permanent gratitude!"

"Have you the password of the night, Captain Lafitte?" inquired the Governor, turning to the table.

"I have, your excellency."

"Farewell then, sir! I am your friend. When we meet again, I trust it will be in the ranks of the American army," concluded the Governor, smiling, and extending his hand to the chief.

Lafitte seized, and grasping it warmly, precipitately left the room.

Passing through the hall, he was rejoined by Theodore, with whom he left the mansion, and replying to the challenge of the sentinel at the gate, the two passed at a rapid pace down the street.

The moon was just rising, and they had been walking but a few minutes, when a clattering of horses' hoofs and the ringing of arms were heard at the extremity of one of the long streets intersecting that they were traversing, and in a few moments, with nodding plumes, ringing swords, and jingling spurs, the general-in-chief, attended by his staff, and followed by two or three mounted citizens, turned the angle of the street, and dashed past them down the road to his head-quarters.

The outlaw and his companion were moving swiftly forward in the shadow of Fort St. Charles, and along the canal, where their boat was secured, having met no one but the horsemen, and occasionally a guard, who challenged and allowed them to pass, since they had left the house, when their attention was attracted by a human figure gliding along the side of the canal Marigny, and evidently seeking to escape observation.

They drew back within the shadow of a building on the banks, when the individual passed them, almost crawling upon the ground. Avoiding the street, immediately afterward, he dropped without noise into the water, swam to the side where they stood, and cautiously ascending the levee, paused a moment, and peered over the top.

Apparently satisfied that he was unobserved, he crept along to the side of the fort, and lingering there for a moment, disappeared around the angle, leaving a paper affixed to the wall.

"Here is mischief brewing," said Lafitte—"Did you observe that fellow closely, Theodore?"

"Yes, I thought at first it was Cudjoe."

"No, no, he is too tall for him; we will see what he has been at."

Followed by Theodore, he left the canal and advanced, until he stood under the walls of the fort.

"It is too dark to read in this pale moon; we will take the paper to the light," he said, passing round the fort, to a lamp burning in the gateway, and over the head of a sentinel posted there.

"Ho, who goes there?"—he challenged, as they approached.

Answering the challenge, Lafitte added:

"Here, guard, is a paper, but now stuck upon the wall of your fort by a skulking slave, who just disappeared among yonder china trees—I fear it bodes mischief in these perilous times."

As he spoke, he held up the placard to the light. On it was printed in large letters, both in French and Spanish:

"Louisianians! remain quiet in your houses; your slaves shall be preserved to you, and your property respected. We make war only against Americans."

"Well, this is most politic," said Lafitte;

"our enemy fights with printed proclamations, signed too by Admiral Cochrane and Major-general Keane! Preserve slaves! These Englishmen have shown me what reliance is to be placed on their promise to preserve slaves to their masters. Did they not, by their insurrection, expect to conquer Louisiana?"

The soldier, who heard him read the placard, was about to call for two or three comrades within the guard-room, to pursue and arrest the black, when Lafitte interrupted him.

"Hold, my good man! I know his person, and the way he has taken. I will pursue him!" And adding to Theodore, "We will now show our attachment to the cause we have embraced," followed the slave.

In a few moments, after passing two other placards, which Theodore destroyed, they saw him—his form hardly distinguishable among the trunks of the trees—apparently engaged in affixing another of the proclamations to a limb. They cautiously approached, when discovering them, and supposing himself unseen, he drew himself up into the tree, to escape detection as they passed by. But this action was detected; and Lafitte walking rapidly forward, caught him by one of his feet before he could conceal himself.

The negro drew a long knife, and would have plunged it into the arm of the captor, over whose head it gleamed as he raised it for the blow, had he not caught his hand and hurled him with violence to the ground.

"Oh mossee, beg a mercy, mossee, pauvre negre—nigger gibbee all up," he cried, rolling upon the ground in pain.

Lafitte grasped him by the arm, and drew from his breast a large bundle of placards.

"Who gave these to you, slave?"

"Mossee, de English ossifer."

"Where is he?"

"Down by Mossee Laronde's plantation; he tellee me stick um up in de city; dey stick um up all 'long on de fence down de levee, mossee. Now, mossee, good, sweet, kind mossee, lettee poor negre go, he hab tell mossee all de libbing truth."

"You must go with me," replied his captor, heedless of the chattering and prayers of the slave; and leading him by the arm, he returned and delivered him to the guard at the fort.

"Take him to the Governor in the morning," he said to the soldier, who called some of his comrades to receive him.

"Thank you, monsieur," replied the guard, as Lafitte turned away. "You are a good patriot. I would all the citizens were like you. Will you take wine?"

"No, monsieur."

"Who, shall I tell the Governor, has taken this prisoner?"

Without replying, he wrote the word "*Lafitte*," with a pencil upon one of the bills, and folding it up, banded it to him. Before the guard could decipher it, he had disappeared below the levee.

Springing into his boat, he waked the Irishman, who had fallen asleep, and sought once more, through the chain of guard-boats, the barge he had left secreted in the mouth of the artificial inlet to the bayou before mentioned. Then releasing his Irish prisoner, with a warning, he entered his own boat; and before the break of day, was again concealed among the huts of the fishermen, which he had left early the preceding evening.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE STORM.

THE decision of the council convened by the Governor of Louisiana, in the executive department of the government-house the following morning, for the purpose of laying before it the letters of the British officers, and consulting with them respecting the offers of the outlaw, is recorded in the history of that period.

After communicating the information contained in the letters, and stating the manner in which they had fallen into his hands, and his reasons for believing them genuine, the Governor submitted for their consideration, two questions:

"Is it your opinion, gentlemen, that these letters are genuine? And—is it proper, as Governor of this State, that I should hold intercourse, or enter into any official correspondence with the Barratarian outlaw and his associates?"

After a warm discussion, an answer was returned in the negative, and with but one exception, unanimously.

With this impolitic decision, which time showed to be unjust and premature, the council broke up. So far indeed were they from placing confidence in Lafitte, that they suggested to a naval officer forming one of the council, and whom we have before introduced to the reader, who had been for several days fitting out a flotilla destined for the island of Barrataria—the propriety of hastening his preparations for the expedition, which had been for some months in contemplation.

Proceeding from the council-chamber to his vessel, the commodore found he could immediately get under way. The same evening, therefore, taking with him a detachment of infantry, he gave the signal for sailing, and moved down the river toward the destined point of attack.

About noon of the same day, the Barratarian chief, ignorant of the proceedings in which he was so deeply interested, sent Theodore to the city, for the purpose of receiving the reply of the Governor.

"Well, Theodore, what news?" he inquired eagerly, standing in the door of one of the fishermen's huts, as the boat, which had conveyed the youth to the city, emerged from the concealment of the banks of the creek, lined with tall grass and cypresses stretching across, and nearly meeting over the water. "Saw you the Governor?"

"I did, monsieur, and a gentleman of noble presence he is," replied Theodore, with animation; "he spoke of you in such terms, that I could not but like him."

"But what said he?" interrogated the chief anxiously, springing into the barge by the side of the youth. "Heard you the decision of the council?"

"Here is a note for you which he gave me."

He seized it and read hurriedly:

"M. Lafitte must regret equally with myself, the decision of the council. I is against your sincerity and the genuineness of the letters. General Villere alone was of my opinion, of which you are already informed. Be patient, dear sir, and take no rash steps. I have unlimited confidence in you. I will consult with the commanding general at the earliest convenience. In the mean while remain firm and your wishes may yet be achieved. You could not have shown your sincerity better than in apprehending the slave last night. This seal of good faith shall be remembered, and will materially advance your suit."

"Is this the way my proffers are received?" said Lafitte, fiercely, with a deep execration, crushing the note in his clinched hand, while his face grew livid with passion and disappointment. "Is it thus I am to be treated—my feelings trifled with—my word doubted—myself scorned—despised? If they will not have my aid, their invaders shall! To your oars, men—to your oars!" he said, turning to his boat's crew. "We must see Barrataria to-night—I have work for all of you."

It was a fearful and bitter moment for Lafitte, to feel that his overtures were refused by his own Government, and yet that he had been offered rank and gold by the British, to betray his country.

For awhile, as he rowed back to his island retreat, he seemed almost tempted to accept the offer of the British commander; but his better nature came back to him ere long, and when he landed for a rest at the cabin of a Natchez Indian chief, he had decided to offer his sword to the United States.

Continuing upon his way, he stopped for shelter from an approaching storm, in the lonely cabin of an old fisherman whom he well knew, and who was, in reality, one of his spies, or go-betweens with the city, for Lafitte often used the bayou ways to go up to New Orleans, and 'most always to send his booty up in boats to agents, who disposed of it for him.

It was, while watching the approach of this storm, gazing upon the grandly rolling clouds of inky hue, and the vivid flashes of lightning, that a tree, near which he stood, was riven by a stroke from topmost bough to root.

His young *protege*, Theodore, sprang to his side, believing him killed by the lightning; but life was yet in him, and he was borne to the cot of the fishman and kindly cared for.

Thus lay the pirate chief for long days, slowly coming back to the life he had so nearly left, through the stroke of offended Heaven.

At last he was able to resume his way to his island, and arriving there at length, found that the American flotilla, under Commodore Patterson, had been before him.

His fleet was captured, sunk or destroyed, by his countrymen, those he had wished to serve, and he felt himself alone in the world.

For a moment he seemed about to despair, and then was again tempted to collect his scattered forces and throw the weight of his sword with England.

But, casting from him the treacherous thought, he refused with indignation the tempting offers of Great Britain, collected his men, and set out for New Orleans, where he arrived in time to cast his fortunes with the American army.

General Jackson promptly accepted his proffered services, and placed him in command of a battery of heavy guns, which did such good work that the American Government, as a reward, extended to him and to his men a pardon for their past crimes, and from that day Lafitte was no longer feared as the dread Pirate of the Gulf.*

* See sequel, "Lafitte's Lieutenant; or, Theodore, the Child of the Sea."

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